

CHRISTIAN WORKER

“We are workers together with Him...” (2 Corinthians 6:1)

VOLUME 107, NUMBER 1-2

TRUSTING IN THE LORD TO OVERCOME

Ronnie Scherffius

The treachery of his son Absalom (2 Sam. 15-18) occasioned David's writing the Third Psalm. While this psalm has special relevance to a particular time in the life of King David, it also serves as a great inspiration for our faith as we endure the trials and tribulations in our own lives.

David began this psalm highlighting the increase of troubles and the great discouragement that was cast his way: “Lord, how are they increased that trouble me! many are they that rise up against me. Many there be which say of my soul, There is no help for him in God. Selah” (Ps. 3:1-2; cf. 2 Sam. 15:12; 22:40; 16:18). The daily struggles we face come from many sources. Like David, we may have trouble in our homes, but we also endure difficulties at work and school. Many find themselves in financial difficulties while others endure deteriorating health. In our darkest times, it seems our troubles increase beyond measure.

Similarly, this life often brings discouragement. The trials of this life can be disheartening, but there are times when discouragement comes from the words of our friends and associates. Embarking on new journeys or setting spiritual goals for personal growth we look to others for strength and encouragement. How discouraging it is when the words we hear only emphasize inadequacies, weaknesses, or past failures. Though our troubles may not be to the extremes of David, we nevertheless endure increased trouble and discouragement in this life from time to time.

The remainder of the psalm reveals how David's trust in God as his Protector and Deliverer enabled him to overcome troubles and discouragements in his life. Let's consider this psalm to discover how such a trust in God will also help us to overcome.

David begins by noting three necessary qualities that a deep abiding faith in God provides that will see us through troubles and discouragement: “But thou, O Lord, art a shield for me; my glory, and the lifter up of mine head.” (Ps. 3:3)

David readily acknowledged God as his Protector: “thou, O Lord, are a shield for me” (3a). God declared to the patriarch Abraham, “I am thy shield” (Gen. 15:1). A shield is a defensive weapon for protection. Moses announced to Israel the blessing of having the Lord as a “shield of help” (Deut. 33:29), and Joshua recorded that even though surrounded by enemies, God gave Israel rest and protection (Josh. 21:43-45).

CONTINUED ON PAGE 7

JANUARY-FEBRUARY 2021

Trusting in the Lord to Overcome RONNIE SCHERFFIUS	1
Turn off the News CODY WESTBROOK.....	2
Five Steps to Destruction DON WALKER.....	3
Why Marriages Fail JOHNNY RAMSEY.....	5
Leaders are made at Home TRENT KENNEDY.....	6

TURN OFF THE NEWS!

Cody Westbrook

Each year the Mental Health America organization conducts a nation-wide mental health survey called *The State of Mental Health in America*. As you may imagine, the 2021 report is near catastrophic. The mental health status of young people is worsening; the number of people experiencing frequent thoughts of suicide or self-harm is the highest ever recorded by the study; COVID pushed the number of people seeking help for anxiety and depression through the roof; even before COVID numbers of people struggling with mental illness increased over 1 million in a 12-month period.¹ People all over our country are struggling to cope with the issues of life, and Christians are not immune to this struggle. Life can be very difficult and thus discouragement and the temptation to be afraid and anxious is very real.

Though the reality of a mental health pandemic in America is not surprising, one of the causes may be. The latest Nielsen *Total Audience* report says the average American spends over 12 hours per day consuming media. This fact, in and of itself, is troubling. Consider, however, the portion of those 12 hours devoted to watching or reading news. Though the instant availability of news through various outlets like television, social media, and the internet make it difficult to pinpoint an exact number, it is safe to assume that the average American consumes at least 70 minutes of news per day. While that amount may seem insignificant on the surface, a closer examination of the effect of news consumption reveals a significant problem.

Psychologists began sounding the warning about the dangers of news consumption several years ago. In a 2012 article titled *The Psychological Effects of TV News*, Psychologist Graham C. L. Davey wrote,

We've known for a long time that the emotional content of films and television programs can affect psychological health. It

¹ Mental Health America, "The State of Mental Health in America 2021," <https://www.mhanational.org/issues/state-mental-health-america>.

can do this by directly affecting your mood, and your mood can then affect many aspects of your thinking and behavior. If the TV program generates a negative mood (anxiety, sadness, anger, or disgust), these experiences will affect how you interpret events in your own life, what types of memories you recall, and how much you will worry about events in your own life.²

How does this relate to news? In a 2018 *Time* article Davey remarked, "The way that news is presented and the way that we access news has changed significantly over the last 15 to 20 years. These changes have often been detrimental to general mental health."³ Gone are the days of journalists and new anchors presenting a neutral and objective presentation of the facts. In our time, the casual news watcher is forced to endure a sophisticated effort to create and push narratives and sensationalize world events in an effort to sway public opinion to align with that of the news organization. Davey remarked on the sensationalist tendency of news by saying,

There is also an increasing tendency for news broadcasters to 'emotionalize' their news and to do so by emphasizing any potential negative outcomes of a story no matter how low the risks of those negative outcomes might be. This is basically scaremongering at every available opportunity in order to sensationalize and emotionalize the impact of a news story... News bulletins also have to compete with entertainment programs for their audience and for their primetime TV slot, and they seem to do this by emphasizing emotionally relevant material

² Graham C.C. Davey, "The Psychological Effects of TV News" June 19, 2012 "<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/why-we-worry/201206/the-psychological-effects-tv-news>

³ Markham Heid, "You Asked: Is It Bad for You to Read the News Constantly?," *TIME* <https://time.com/5125894/is-reading-news-bad-for-you/>

such as crime, war, or famine at the expense of more positive material.⁴

These efforts on the part of news organizations have a detrimental effect on the viewer's mental health. One study revealed that those who watch negative news stories tend to be more sad and more anxious than those who watch positive news stories.⁵ Negative news also has a tendency to make a person worry so much about personal problems that those problems are unrealistically magnified. Today's news can cause acute stress symptoms like insomnia, mood swings, aggressive behavior, and even PTSD.⁶ Numerous studies identify effects such as lack of productivity, feelings of hopelessness and despair, frustration, and an overwhelming feeling of danger all related to negative news consumption. Without question, those who spend much of their day watching or reading news are likely to suffer negative consequences that will manifest in their thoughts and actions.

Students of Scripture should not be surprised by this information. God's Word addresses mental health in a number of ways, and in so doing reveals the connection between what we consume and how we think and feel. When the Pharisees accused Jesus' disciples of violating tradition by neglecting to wash their hands before eating, Jesus responded by correctly identifying true defilement. Later, when explaining His answer to the disciples He said, "For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. These are the things which defile a man, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile a man" (Matt. 15:19-20). The point is that action begins in the heart. Murderers do not simply wake up one morning and decide to commit murder. Rather, anger and wickedness are allowed to fester in their heart until finally the fruit is produced (cf. Matt. 5:21-26). Why is this the case? Because "as he thinks in his heart, so is he" (Pro. 23:7). If our minds are constantly influenced by things that are negative or evil, eventually fruit of the same kind will be produced. If we fill our minds with profanity, our tongues will follow suit. If we hear lies long enough, we begin to believe them. This is why manipulation is often so successful. Our thoughts precede our actions.

Monitoring exposure is paramount to our spiritual and emotional well-being. Solomon said, "Keep your heart with all diligence for out of it spring the issues of life" (Pro. 4:23). Philippians 4:8 serves as a perfect blueprint for doing it. Paul wrote,

Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things.

This is the biblical version of the "garbage in, garbage out" principle. Paul says we ought to "meditate," or, fill our minds with things that are good. Why? Because of the principles stated in the previous paragraph. If we allow our minds to be filled with garbage constantly, then garbage will be produced. But if we fill our minds with things that are good, then good will be produced. We must hold fast to the good (1 Thess. 5:21).

Too many Christians are struggling with depression and discouragement, largely because of world events. But instead of becoming overwhelmed with the negativity of this world we ought to focus on God's faithfulness (Lam. 3:21). We ought to rejoice (Phil. 4:1) and allow our faith to be strengthened through study and meditation of scripture (Phil. 4:11-13; Ps. 1). Everyone deals with discouragement occasionally, but if we are not careful, we can bring it on unnecessarily. According to scripture and psychology, watching too much news will do just that. If you find yourself overwhelmed by the troubles of the world, try turning off the news.

CW

FIVE STEPS TO DESTRUCTION

Don Walker

Jeremiah had been called at a very critical time in the history of Israel and Judah. The Northern Kingdom, Israel, had already been carried away. Isaiah, who prophesied some 700 years before Christ, had warned Israel repeatedly of her sins, yet she would not hear nor take heed.

Jeremiah had been called to be a prophet to the southern tribe of Judah, but he felt ill equipped for the task because of his age (Jer. 1:5,6). However, Jehovah had other plans indeed,

...Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth. See, I have this day set thee over the nations and over kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant (Jer. 1:9,10).

⁴ Davey
⁵ Ibid
⁶ Heid

Even later in this book Jeremiah's apprehension would shine forth. Fortunately, the drive to preach was stronger than the fear he may have possessed.

Then I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name. But his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I would not stay (Jer. 20:9).

The times of Jeremiah were very much like our times. It was a period of wealth and prosperity, yet lacking in, and poor in, spirituality and godliness. In Jeremiah we find a picture of this hellish society as we follow the five steps of destruction outlined by this prophet.

The Word of the Lord was a reproach (Jer. 6:10). In chapter 8:9 we see that "the wise men are ashamed, they are dismayed and taken: lo, they have rejected the word of the Lord; and what wisdom is in them?" They were a people who obeyed not the voice of the Lord, nor received correction (Jer. 7:28). It is no wonder they went backward and not forward (Jer. 7:24).

Everyone was given to covetousness (Jer. 6:13). Isaiah would describe the people as "greedy dogs which can never have enough" (Isa. 56:11). We must realize that covetousness is idolatry, and we must beware of it (Col. 3:5; Luke 12:15). Salvation cannot be purchased with silver or gold (Zeph. 1:18), nor is Jehovah impressed with treasures we accumulate here on earth. We must lay up treasures in heaven as we walk contentedly here (Matt. 6:19-24; Heb. 13:5).

They said, "Peace, peace; when there is no peace" (Jer. 6:14). They were a people who did not recognize the problems that surrounded them. Many today fail to recognize the problems the church faces. The Bible speaks of false teachers in every time frame. In fact, Peter said,

but there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction (2 Pet. 2:1).

Though we live in a time of blessing, we must also realize that we must beware (Col. 2:8).

They could not blush (Jer. 6:15). Zephaniah said, "The unjust knoweth no shame" (Zeph. 3:5). The fine art of blushing is being lost. Immodesty is becoming the sign of the times, and there seems to be no shame. Wild, rebellious children, and sin going unopposed should be a shame to any people, and yet is the order of the day for many. We

need to get back to the purity of God's standard.

They refused to walk in the old paths (Jer. 6:16). There are those who are clamoring for change and for that which is new. However, we must realize that the Bible says now what it said in the beginning. In the area of New Testament Christianity, we must realize that the church and the message are more than 1900 years old. We need to seek the "old paths" of God's Word.

We can learn great lessons from the Old Testament if we will. May we keep those things in mind as we study our Bible much, much, more

CW

ARISE!
Biblical Principles for
Congregational Growth
FEBRUARY 26 - 28, 2021
SOUTHWEST CHURCH OF CHRIST
REGISTER ONLINE @ SWCOFC.ORG

COVID-19 REGULATIONS
Elders Request Masks to be Worn in Building
Prepackaged & Individually Wrapped Meals Provided
No Childcare Available this Year
No Housing Available this Year

8900 Menchaca Road Austin, TX 78748 512-282-2486

WHY MARRIAGES FAIL

Johnny Ramsey

God ordained marriage in the second chapter of the first book of the Bible. He knew it “it is not good for man to be alone” (Gen. 2:18). What Jehovah joined together (husband and wife), man should not “put asunder” (Matt. 19:6). But, in the past thirty years -- in America alone -- we have the sad statistic of over a million divorces a year. In many towns and states, about 50 percent of all marriages begun have resulted in separation or divorce. Psa. 34:3 is a beautiful passage that ought to be honored by all young couples at their weddings: “O magnify the Lord with me, let us glorify His name together.”

Why do so many marriages fail? Here are some of the reasons: Selfishness. Money Matters. In-laws. Failure to Meet Physical Responsibility. Lack of Spirituality. Differences on Use of Money. Flirtations at Work. Pornography, on TV and Movies.

Selfishness manifests itself in many ways. To seek one's own pleasure and not working at pleasing one's mate drives a self-centered husband or wife to forget that marriage demands a 100 percent effort from both parties. Spoiled children do not form the basis for a successful marriage. When both parties are Christ-centered, it is indeed a blessing and an omen of brighter days. When the home is based on materialism or the pursuit of things, or the desire for money, the lack of spiritual fervor is very evident.

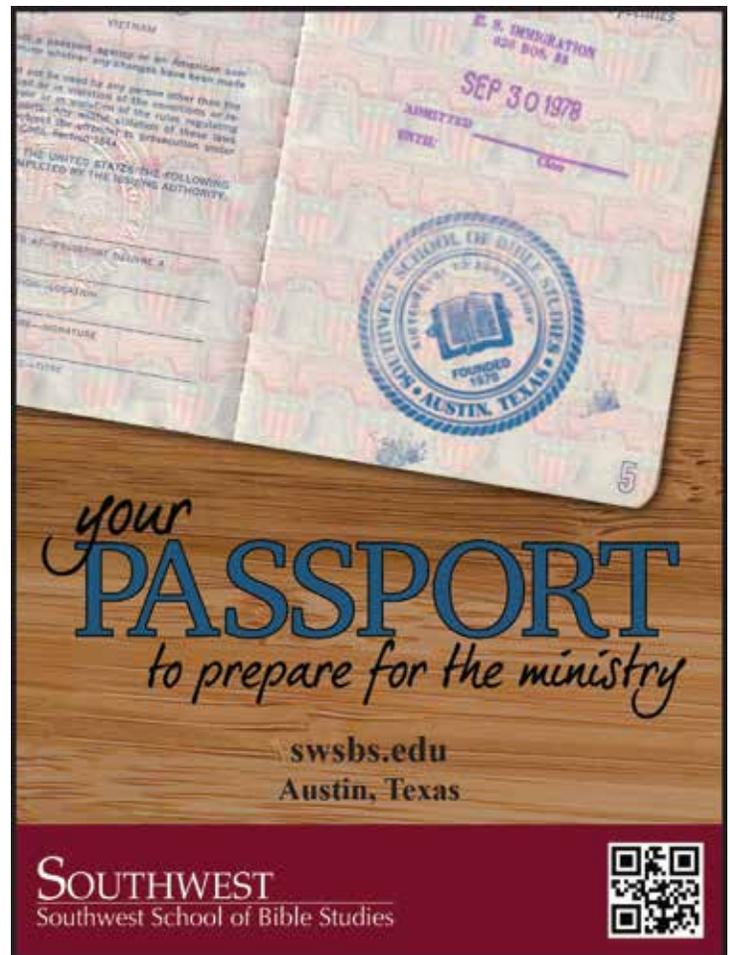
Money, and its use, is at the top of the list of most counselors who deal with marital problems. Credit cards and their misuse would certainly reflect on the breaking up of many homes. When parents fail to teach the importance of paying debts, they do greatly err and help to form the grave problems that will plague their children's future. The greedy concept of covetousness has overwhelmed so many young couples. Col. 3:5 calls this idolatry! When we apply the principle of Psa. 85:10 to the way young couples should think, we find ingredients of godliness that should conquer desire for grandeur: “Mercy and truth have met together; righteousness and peace have kissed.”

Wise parents, rather than wanting for their offspring a big house, fine cars and social standing, should say with 3 John 4, “I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.” More and more today we see the break-up of marriages due to flirtations at work, that destroy trust and often lead to adultery. Internet romances and the hedonism promulgated by television, Hollywood and the pornography

business also play a major role in the breakup of marriages. A lack of Bible reading and indifference toward worship and active participation as members of the church of the Lord cause many couples to have very little convictions in the realm of godliness. It is of monumental concern by godly elders, Bible teachers and gospel preachers to observe the decline in spirituality in our day.

Young couples need to know that the proper place for sensual desires and fulfillment is in marriage. 1 Cor. 7:1-5 distinctly teaches this, and we need to honor this as we honor all Bible lessons. Here is another realm that demands tender and loving care for each other, rather than just selfish gratification. Marriage should be the vestibule of heaven (Eph. 5:22-33), but sadly, it is all too often “hell on earth.” Let's make our home a foretaste of glory divine!

CW



Leaders are made at Home

Trent Kennedy

Imagine the sad state of the local congregation if an aged eldership were to look out at the flock and see only men who were in need of training instead of men trained, only men who could stomach milk and none to chew on solid food, only men who should be taught instead of those who by reason of time had become teachers themselves. Such an eldership would have to concede that not a man of their congregation would be able to serve as an elder because not a man among them would be qualified. Herein lies the importance of training men to be leaders when they are young (cf. Judges 2:10). These men can do great good as preachers and teachers, servants and encouragers. And, if properly trained and later completely qualified (cf. 1 Tim. 3:1-7, Tit. 1:5-9), they can serve the local congregation as elders. The church can work diligently to train leaders (2 Tim. 2:2), and individuals have the burden of responsibility to grow (2 Pet. 3:18)—these two facts should not be debated. But we must realize that leadership training begins in our homes.

Parents are the first leaders that young people see and serve under. Parental leadership becomes a model, good or bad, for future leadership qualities, aptitude, and ability. Civic leaders are built in the home. Business leaders are built in the home. Spiritual leaders are built in the home. While there will be others who contribute to the success or failure of young men becoming leaders, that process, good or bad, begins in the home.

In light of this, parents must value the church and her leaders. The children who grow up under our roofs will see the high value of spiritual leadership only if parents show them by choosing to value spiritual leaders, themselves. Will our children see their parents respect local leadership in the church (Heb. 13:7, 17)? Will our children hear their parents compliment and praise those same leaders in public and in private? Will our children know that we live out the commands to know those who labor over us (1 Thess. 5:12-13) and communicate good to those who teach us (Gal. 6:6)? Or, will our children see that we constantly demean and criticize those who lead? If parents will not honor spiritual leaders (cf. Rom. 13:7), then children will not place value on leaders or leadership roles. Parents, especially fathers, need to speak honestly and highly of leaders and be willing to help shoulder their load. Children need to know that we desire to be leaders, that we value

good, godly leaders, that future leadership is important to us, and that we want them, our children, to take on those leadership roles.

Additionally, parents must desire that their children, especially young men, contribute to the work of the church. High expectations should be set on the spiritual lives of our young people. It is not too much to ask that our children learn to lead singing, read and comprehend the Scriptures, prepare themselves to communicate what they learn, and more. Schools expect them to handle heavy work loads and parents encourage the challenge! Our young men need to know, from mother and father, that while their academic and athletic success may be important, their spiritual success is our utmost priority for them. Secular activities can be great springboards to leadership development, but they cannot be the only places we push our young people to lead. We would love for them to be class president or team captain, but leadership that endures will be their spiritual leadership. Our sons and grandsons and nephews need to know that we want them to qualify themselves to serve as deacons and elders someday.

Parents must be sure to involve their children in their service to the Lord and not neglect their children's spiritual development in lieu of physical. Developing our children into future leaders means that we must invest in them. Specifically, we must invest one of our most precious resources, time, to developing our children in their leadership capacities. Our children should be included when we prepare sermons, classes, song service, public prayers, and devotional talks. Our children should serve as silent partners or helpers in our personal evangelism. Those children should be involved in our hospitality. It is amazing to see the abilities that children have to cook and clean and help entertain guests. Each parent can include their children in visiting the sick, wayward, or downtrodden. We must be available to our children (Pro. 23:22-25; Eph. 6:4). If the home will train young men for the Heavenly Father, then the father of the house plays an essential role. In order for our young men to grow up healthy, spiritually and mentally, fathers must serve as the family provider, serve as the leader of the household, provide spiritual direction to their wife and children, and provide protection for their families.

While leading in assemblies is important, the church must see that not all spiritual leadership occurs in the public assembly (Acts 6; 1 Cor. 11:3; Tit. 1:10-11, et al). When I say "the church needs spiritual leaders," I am not confining that need to only the public gatherings of the church. Leadership occurs in many corners of the congregation and out front where we often see elders and deacons, teacher and preachers, and others leading. Since leadership is needed

in every corner of the church, we should then encourage young people to lead in other areas as well. Brethren, we should start with our homes.

CW

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

As Christians in the sheepfold of Christ, we have the assurance of the protection of the Good Shepherd (John 10:10-18, 27-29). And though “in this world” we may have “tribulation” we can “be of good cheer” (John 16:33), for our Shepherd ever watches over and guards our souls.

Because of his abiding trust in God, **David gloried not in himself but God:** “thou, O Lord, art...my glory” (3b). Accomplished men of history are often identified as “the great.” Cyrus the Great of Persia and Alexander the Great of Macedonia were men noted for their military conquests. In true self-aggrandizing fashion, Nebuchadnezzar gloried in himself: Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?” (Dan. 4:30) David’s boast was not in his own majesty but the majesty and might of God.

Though a man of considered accomplishment and zeal (Gal. 1:13, 14; Phil 3:4-7), Paul gloried not in himself but in the cross of Christ and the salvation of God (Gal. 6:14). In physical peril, Paul trusted in God and was delivered (2 Cor. 1:8-10). Yet, he readily acknowledged that all suffering in this life was not worthy to be compared to the great deliverance and glory that belongs to all in the life to come who glory and trust in God (Rom. 8:18). Indeed we endure difficulties and discouragements in this life, but glory to God who delivers and protects us.

Though his enemies increased and discouragements were ever present, **David’s trust in God caused him to look to God for encouragement:** “thou, O Lord, art...the lifter up of mine head” (3c). David was a man who could see the forest in spite of the trees! Many allow the troubles and discouragements of life to become a dark cloud. They are overwhelmed with darkness. All they see is negative. When David was cast down, he looked to God!

Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me? hope thou in God:

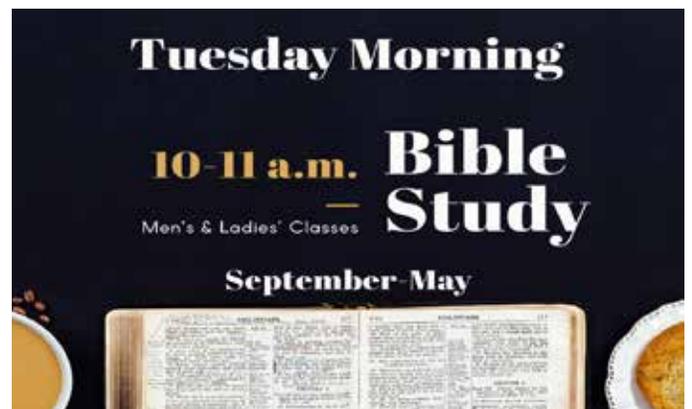
for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance.” (Ps. 42:5)

As with a sword in my bones, mine enemies reproach me; while they say daily unto me, Where is thy God? Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God. (Ps. 42:10-11)

When facing difficulties do we allow our souls to be cast down, or do we hope in God? When we are discouraged by our enemies, or even by those we count as friends, do we allow our souls to be cast down, or do we praise God for the spiritual health and strength He provides to endure all troubles? Some cannot see the forest for the trees, we sometimes cannot see the blessings and joys of heaven for the troubles. Friend, God never promised a life without trouble, but He has promised His strength to endure those troubles.

Hear the song of David: “thou, O Lord, art a shield for me; my glory, and the lifter up of mine head” (Ps. 3:3). Brethren, let us never fail to acknowledge that God is our Protector. Let us cease glorying in our own strength by seeking to overcome our difficulties through our own means, and let us glory in God for His deliverance. Let us be ever mindful that when our heads are held low because of discouraging circumstances that it is God who can lift us up. Trusting in the Lord we will overcome.

CW





www.swsbs.edu

FACULTY

Steven Lloyd Director
Clay Bond Associate Director
Matt Gibson
Wayne Jones
Carl McCann
Ronnie Scherffius
Logan Summers
Cody Westbrook

SOUTHWEST

SOUTHWEST SCHOOL OF BIBLE STUDIES

Southwest graduates serve as preachers, authors, campus directors, missionaries, and school leaders on five continents. Whatever your passion, with strong academics and hands-on training, our collegiate program will empower you to serve Christ and His church.

- Two year full-time program for men and women
- Well-respected Bible faculty
- Verse-by-verse study of the entire Bible
- Training in expository preaching
- No tuition
- Living expense assistance available
- Studies in Biblical languages

“To Know Jesus and...make Him known”

From the Director's desk



Steven Lloyd
Director SWSBS

Brother Wayne Jackson presented a lesson years ago titled, “Why Preacher’s Quit Preaching.” He asked the audience to imagine a young man watching a preacher enter the pulpit wearing a three-piece suit with a gold pocket-watch draped in his vest. The young man in the audience thinks to himself, “Wow, this must be the star of the show.” So, the young man decides to prepare to preach only to find out that the preacher is not the star of the show—and he quits. The “star of the show” metaphor is not the best one to have in mind when considering the work of a preacher. It is not even a good one. It is certainly not useful. In fact, I would say it is detrimental.

Paul parallels the work of a preacher with a soldier (2 Tim.2:4); an athlete (2:5); and with the “hardworking farmer” (2:6). Preachers are “servants” and “messengers”. There are a host of analogies and metaphors more useful and accurate than “the star of the show.”

I do not know what image incoming students at Southwest have of the preacher, but I would assume that the reader would agree with me that the more accurate an image they have of the real work of a preacher, the less likely they will be to abandon the work because they started with an image that misrepresents the work.

One of our responsibilities, as instructors, is to help our students think accurately about the work of a preacher. I think we are able to do that because each instructor at the school is doing the work of a preacher. We have hands on experience—years of hands-on experience. We have all made our mistakes, and have grown from them, and are able to pass on our experience

www.swcofc.org