

miracle on APARECIDA Island

John Peeples,
IBFI Mission Director

The spread of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and of Independent Baptist Churches in the Rio Negro region of Brazil is one of the great miracles of God's grace in modern missions. God has placed True and Diana Hawkins in an important strategic position. They helped to start and continue to work with several Bible Institutes that are training pastors and leaders. They are also diligent to provide assistance and guidance to numerous pastors, churches, and church plants spread out in one of the most remote locations on the planet. As you read True's account of one of the many victories they have witnessed, please continue to pray for True and Diana Hawkins.

Aparecida Island is located three hours by outboard above the town of Saint Gabriel of the Rapids on the Rio Negro. This is just over six hundred and fifty miles upriver from Manaus, the capital city of Amazonas.



This island has been occupied for many years by several families and was named for the lady saint "Aparecida," known in English as Our Lady of the Appearance. The people on this island worshipped and served their idol faithfully for decades, building a shrine and celebrating her special day with an annual "fiesta," and inviting people from far and near to their festivities.

This particular celebration became well-known and was anxiously awaited all year. People would come to this island in canoe caravans of four or more from the other villages on the Rio Negro and its tributaries. Traditionally, the first canoe always carries their community's idol with two youths waving flags in the bow; one white, symbolizing the Holy Spirit, and the other with the color and emblem of their own particular idol. The last canoe in line carries the fireworks and shoots them off as they leave their homeport and as they are arriving in the village where the fiesta is being held. The hosts decorate their community center with homemade and store bought decorations, slaughter the pigs they had been fattening up for the occasion, purchase lots of fireworks, and most of all, lay up many cases of cheap whiskey. This custom is common all over the Amazon Basin. Aparecida Island became known for its rowdy, boisterous, and many times violent weeklong celebrations and for all the confusion, immorality, and drunkenness associated with their Saint Day.

Andre, a believer from further upriver, moved his family to the island and began holding services in his home on the east side of the island. He began winning people one by one and asked the churches up and down the river to pray for a miracle to happen on the west side of Aparecida Island.

At first, the people on the west side resisted and rejected the message, and then resented those who failed to come to the fiesta and participate in the festivities. Some even persecuted those who refused to contribute.

God began to work through the simple preaching of the Word and a miracle happened: one by one the rest of the villagers were saved, and God changed their hearts and minds. They abandoned their sin and idolatry and cancelled their famous Saint's Day festival. The community center used for their drunken parties became their church building, because Andre's house became too small to hold the entire group of Christians. Today, they are a very united group of believers. Their dedication to the idol was transformed into godly zeal. Their financial contributions for the fiesta turned into tithes and offerings for a new auditorium on the highest and very best spot on the island, the place that before had been dedicated and separated for dancing and drinking. The entire community takes two days a week to invest in their new building. The ladies mix cement, help make the concrete blocks, and prepare meals for the workers. The men do the heavy work and are



currently finishing the building's structure.

Upon our visit in July, they asked us what to name their church. Since it is built on a huge piece of flat granite, it was easily decided "Baptist Church on the Rock." They hope to finish the building by the end of the year. The plan is to invite all the communities who used to come to the pagan festivities to come hear the gospel that changed their lives and ways.

What to do with the idol? They took it from the shrine and discarded it, embarrassed that they had lived in darkness and been trapped by idolatry and sin for so long. Because of the miracle of salvation, in the place of the debauchery, sorrow, guilt, and shame, God's love, peace, joy, and hope reign on that strip of land.

There was talk of leveling the shrine and throwing the stones into the river. They decided to leave it standing as a testimony of what God had done to all those passing by their village. It is also a reminder to them of the God who bought them (I Corinthians 6:20) and of what He has done in and through them. They are examples of faith and of what God is still doing in the hearts of sinners (Ephesians 1:15-16). These men and women are a miracle brought about by missions. They are a direct result of your giving, praying, and sending out missionaries to share the glorious gospel of salvation.



True and Diana Hawkins



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OCTOBER MEETING RECAP PENSACOLA BAPTIST CHURCH PENSACOLA, FLORIDA



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THINGS EVERY PREACHER SHOULD DILIGENTLY CONSIDER

Dr. Raymond W. Barber

The true preacher is God-called, God-commissioned, and God-challenged. Any man who calls himself a preacher and who cannot testify to the above statement should reexamine his position in life.

As sure as the **doctor** prescribes the right medicine, as sure as the **banker** issues the right money, as sure as the **counselor** gives the right advice, as sure as the **attorney** interprets the right law, as sure as the **agent** issues the right ticket, and as sure as the **judge** renders the right decision, so the **preacher** should preach the right message from the right book - the inspired word of the living God!

The “froward,” or proud in heart, are abominable in the sight of God and are wicked. These the Lord resisteth (I Peter 5:5). On the other hand, “His secret is with the righteous” (Verse 32).

THE KIND OF PREACHERS GOD LOOKS FOR

God Looks for Men:

Who tarry long in prayer and stand tall in the pulpit.
Whose faith has been fortified with a new fervor.
Who persistently watch for souls and patiently wait for the Savior.
Who earnestly and excitedly preach the Word without fear or favor.
Who fervently declare the riches of Christ and forcefully denounce the sins that nailed Him to the cross.
Who clearly point multitudes toward heaven and compassionately plead for men to stay out of hell.

Places that Men Look for Preachers:

In the *philosophy department* for a deep thinker.
In the *academic arena* for a brilliant scholar.
In the *speech academy* for an articulate orator.
In the *crystal cathedral* for a polished preacher.

Places that God Look for Preachers:

In the wild, woolly wilderness for a *nobody*, out of whom He can make a *somebody*, who can tell *everybody* about **One** who can save *anybody*.
God looks not among the educated, the sophisticated, the coronated, the decorated, the regulated, or the designated.
He looks among the *ostracized*, the *outcasts*, and the *ordinary*.

THE KIND OF PREACHER I WANT TO BE

The kind of preacher I want to be
Is one who measures time by eternity.
I want to preach without fear or favor,
To stand for God and never waver.
I want to go and give and pray,
And live for Jesus every day.
I want others to see Jesus, not me;
This is the kind of preacher I want to be.

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Mark Brown, IBFI President

With the changing colors of the leaves and the temperature beginning to cool off, we are reminded that the fall season has descended upon us, and winter is fast approaching. Fall also brings with it our Semi-Annual Fellowship of the IBFI, which was held October 13-15. The Pensacola Baptist Temple of Pensacola, Florida, hosted the meeting, and as they always do, they did a great job. The music was uplifting, the fellowship was encouraging, and the preaching was “on target.” Glen Anderson is the pastor of the Pensacola Baptist Temple. Bro. Anderson is a graduate of NBBS and currently is serving as Secretary of the IBFI.

We were also encouraged to hear how the Lord is blessing Norris Bible Baptist Seminary in so many ways. The 2015-2016 school year got off to a great start and it continues to gain momentum as the school year moves forward. “Now more than ever,” keep the NBBS students, faculty, and staff in your prayers!

During the Wednesday evening service of the fellowship meeting, we had the opportunity to view a video presentation highlighting the missions agency of the IBFI. We are truly thankful for all of our missionary families, as well as our missions director and his wife. “Now more than ever,” keep our missionaries in your prayers!

Fall is here, and winter is coming soon. When Paul told Timothy to “.. do thy diligence to come before winter..” (II Timothy 4:21), he was reminding Timothy that the matter at hand was urgent, and there was a small window of opportunity. “NOW MORE THAN EVER” we need to be busy about the work the Lord has for us to do!



WELL WORTH THE DRIVE!

Jonathan J. Stewart, NBBS President

A VERY ENCOURAGING MEETING

The ingredients necessary for a successful fellowship meeting were present at the semi-annual meeting of the IBFI conducted at the Pensacola Baptist Temple in Pensacola, Florida, a few days ago. Knowing that others have written in this edition of the Searchlight about the gathering at Pensacola, and realizing that **the word “ditto” would readily and largely represent my feelings about what others have said**, I will focus on how it related to the seminary.

The alumni were well represented by way of the host pastor, Glen Anderson, a 1994 graduate of Norris, by some of those who preached, by those in the IBFI Board Meeting, and by many of the persons present in the services.

It was not uncommon to hear in sermons by those who were not graduates of NBBS also express their excitement for the school. Others in attendance remarked accordingly in personal conversation to me or in public comments.

OFFERINGS ARE MAKING A DIFFERENCE

We are grateful for the generous love offering taken on Wednesday night of the meeting for the Seminary. The money will be used to further facilitate the dormitory. (One of the students living in it is from the host church for the meeting, the Pensacola Baptist Temple.) The dormitory is being upgraded, just as the actual school facility is, as funds continue to become available to do so.

God continues to add to the number of churches who on a regular basis support the seminary. **It is important for every church to know that no matter the amount of their support, it is a morale builder** for students, school leadership, and faculty, as well as the IBFI in general. We know behind the support are also prayers, for which we are especially grateful.

One supporting pastor attending the IBFI Board Meeting on Tuesday, urged that one Sunday a year be set aside as “NBBS Sunday,” and that churches be encouraged to take up an offering for the school on that day. There was a hearty level of support for it immediately by the many board members. In response to this, **we are designating Sunday, March 6, 2016, to be that Sunday.** Gentlemen, mark your calendars. Obviously, if that date does not work for your church, a Sunday before or after this date would be wholly appropriate also. We will be promoting the Sunday increasingly as it draws near.



INVESTING IN THE PRESENT IN VIEW OF THE FUTURE

We always want to frame any giving to the NBBS in the context of it being an **investment in eternity**. A preacher and the church he pastors or the mission field in which he serves affects the lives of thousands for the cause of Christ throughout his years of ministry.

Much has been accomplished at the seminary in one year because of the support of so many, but there still is much to be done. The student body, now being about three dozen in number and the recent contributions of several churches, causes us to anticipate where the school will be this time next year! Last year, we had about a “baker’s dozen” of students and some very early significant support from the brethren, both of which served to indeed be the first fruits of the school’s continued reemergence.

A CLOSING WORD OF THANKS

The magnification of Christ in the music and sermons, undergirded by the actions and overall tone of all present, made the 12-hour drive from Texas to Florida, well worth the time and effort! Thank you again Pensacola Baptist Temple, and pastor Glen Anderson.

Terry Riggsby, NBBS Field Representative

At this writing we are at mid-semester at the Norris Bible Baptist Seminary. Things are going well! Enrollment is up, classes and chapel are going well, and we have a good student body!

Special thanks to the following churches and pastors for having me in their services: Bible Baptist Church, Cleburne, Texas, Dr. Don Shipman, pastor; Fort Victory Baptist Church, Crowley, Texas, Bro. William Keisling, pastor; and Community Baptist Church, Rendon, Texas, Bro. Tony Graves, pastor.

Once again, if you are interested in having me come and present the Seminary or fill a pulpit, feel free to call me at 817-648-1859.



ALUMNI NEWS

Glen Anderson, Alumni President

As Alumni President I look forward to news and information concerning our alumni. It is exciting to see what God is doing around the world through our graduates. I would like to share the following letter with you from Bro. Thomas Jones a 1993 graduate.

What does it mean to serve the Lord? For my wife and me, serving the Lord has meant taking the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ to the precious souls of Guatemala. Our service in Guatemala has been a labor of love and a great privilege for the past twenty years. One who serves the Lord must live a life of surrender to God’s will. Our life verse says it best, “And I will gladly spend and be spent for you...” II Corinthians 12:15.

I accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as my Saviour on July 23, 1988, when two boys from Trinity Baptist Church came to my door soul winning. The Lord became very real in my life, and it was not long before He called me to preach. My preparation for serving the Lord began with the bus ministry at the church and my schooling at NBBS. The Lord blessed me with a wonderful wife who was ready to serve our Saviour in Guatemala and to make all the sacrifices of deputation, language school, and faith building to get us to the field.

In Jeremiah 1:5-7, God told the prophet Jeremiah, “Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a



Michael Wiggins, NBBS Administrator

Psalms 66:5, “Come and see the work of God: he is terrible in his doings toward the children of men.”

This would be my invitation to any of you. Come and see what God is doing at NBBS! If at the beginning of the semester I were told to write down what I thought God would do this year, I would not have gotten close to the things God has done thus far at NBBS. I am so amazed by our freshmen class because of how well they are doing in their studies. I was pleased that the majority of our students did well on their mid terms.

Each one of our supporting churches should know that we cannot do what we do without your financial and prayer support. You should also know that we are praying for our supporting churches and pastors.

May I encourage each church to promote NBBS. The quality of the Bible education the students will get from NBBS will ground them in a foundation that will help them never to waver from the Word of God. We are a school of specialization: we train men and women for the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ.



prophet unto the nations. Then said I, Ah, Lord God! behold, I cannot speak: for I am a child. But the Lord said unto me, Say not, I am a child: for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak.”

Through simple faith and obedience to God’s Word, some 2,500 souls have come to Christ, three Independent Baptist Churches have been established with five missions out of those churches, and a local church Bible institute and the First Independent Bible Baptist Seminary in western Guatemala have been established. To God be the glory!

Many notable individuals have been saved over the years. As example, I think of Bro. Billy, saved at the age of 83, who dedicated his remaining years to be a witness with gospel tracts and invitations to his church. A 17-year old boy, who after receiving Christ as Saviour, gave to God by acts of kindness before the Lord took him to heaven. A young lady crippled from birth not only received Christ and eternal salvation but also was rescued from a life of physical neglect and abuse.

God has done great things and has allowed us to be more than just spectators, but instruments in His great plan of redemption to those to whom He has sent us in Guatemala.



Thomas and Kim Jones
Missionaries to Guatemala