

**February 14, 2020**

I have been to over 40 Southern Baptist Convention annual meetings in my lifetime. My favorite part has always been the Pastors' Conference. Some of the most moving times I have ever experienced were in moments of response to a message or moments of worship there.

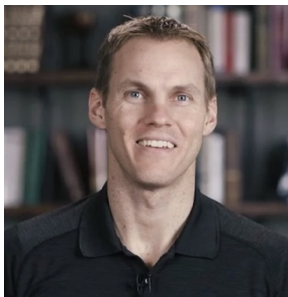
When I became president of the conference, I began to recall those moments that blessed me. When I did, there was a pattern: every one of them had to do with encouragement. The speakers and guests that made the greatest lasting impact were those that encouraged me. I know that is because those were times of discouragement at my church, or in my marriage, or in seminary. I still believe encouragement is one of the greatest needs we have, so I have planned accordingly.

This year's Pastors' Conference theme was born out of an overwhelming sense of the need for love and encouragement among us and through us to our churches, our communities, and the world. "Beloved" is the heart of that need. From the speakers to the music to the stories and testimonies shared, everything will radiate from 1 John 4:11: "Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another."

The irony of this is that my direction with the conference has created more division and hostility than I ever could have imagined. Could I appeal to you to be open and give God a chance to speak through every person who is a part of this program?

## **LOVED BY GOD**

On Sunday night, the conference begins with an evening of worship built around the first part of verse 11, "Beloved, if God so loved us..." Two people God has used in my life to remind me of His love for me are **David Platt** and **Wayne Cordeiro**. I pray that this is a night of encouragement for all who attend.



**David Platt**

Pastor, McLean Bible Church, Vienne, Virginia

David needs no introduction to us as Southern Baptists. Few people can articulate God's love for a broken world better than David Platt. I have asked him to remind us of how deep the Father's love is for us.



### **Wayne Cordeiro**

Pastor and Author

New Hope Christian Fellowship, Honolulu, Hawaii

I know many of you, like me, have had days where you have led on empty. Wayne's story of his own journey through burnout will encourage and uplift you and I have asked Wayne to share this story with us. Wayne has spoken at our church at Exponential and his message, *Leading on Empty*, was profoundly impactful to our pastors. Most pastors have faced discouragement at one time or another and I have asked him to share his story that will give us encouragement in the battle.

## **LOVING OTHERS - AT HOME**

On Monday we begin to focus on the second part of the verse, "love one another." The place where that all begins is not in our church or our community or even our convention, it is in our home. The landscape of Southern Baptists is littered with the brokenness of children and spouses that had to settle for leftovers from the ministries that are so demanding. Speakers including **Emerson Eggerichs** and **Ken Davis** will encourage us in these areas of loving one another at home.



### **Emerson Eggerichs**

Author, Love & Respect

Emerson is a renowned author and personal friend. In my time of pastoring, the best marriage events I have ever been a part of were the ones I did with Emerson and Sarah Eggerichs. I believe loving one another starts at home, and Emerson will speak to us on that.



### **Ken Davis**

Comedian & Speaker

Ken is a talented comedian, speaker, and long-time friend. He has been a guest at First Baptist Orlando many times and it is always a joy to have him. Ken will continue the conversation around loving one another at home as we laugh together at our crazy families in the church world.

## **LOVE OTHERS - AT CHURCH**

We will begin to broaden the circle of "one another," focusing on loving those around us in our churches and the communities we serve. We will be challenged to love those who do not love



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us back or those who hurt us. We will hear stories of churches that wound, and brothers and sisters who have left scars in us. And we will be called to love outside the walls of our churches - to love people who are not at all like us.



### **Joby Martin**

Pastor of The Church of Eleven22, Jacksonville, Florida

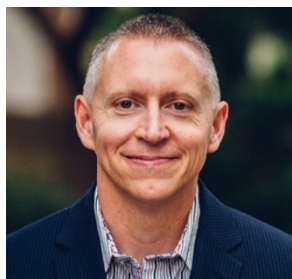
Joby is one of the most encouraging and inspiring voices for church planters in the country. He is a regular at Exponential which is hosted at our church every year. I know how deeply Southern Baptists are committed to church planting, particularly in our SEND cities. If there is one group we want to be sure to equip and encourage, it is our church planters! He has had an amazing ministry of reaching those who felt the church was not the place for them.



### **Erik Cummings**

Pastor at New Life Baptist Church, Carol City, Florida

Erik has served for the past two years as President of the Florida Baptist Convention. He also pastors a growing church in one of the most difficult metro areas in America in South Florida. He preached a message on love and unity at our church last year that had a profound impact on us and on me personally. I have asked him to share that message with all of you.



### **Vance Pitman**

Pastor at Hope Church in Las Vegas, Nevada

Vance has one of the most aggressive church planting strategies to date. He has built a church in Las Vegas that is truly a church for everyone - a church where anyone can call home and find love. He represents, to me, the incredible pioneer spirit that we need reaching cities and places that are beyond the Bible belt of our country.



### **David Hughes**

Pastor at Church by the Glades in Coral Springs, Florida

David is one of the most creative and innovative communicators and pastors I know. His church has baptized over 11,000 in the past ten years. David and Church by the Glades were at “ground zero” at the Parkland shootings. It was only as a result of his credibility within his community, for loving his community, that he and his church were able to minister to hundreds of families in that crisis. I have asked David to speak to us about loving a community in a purely secular environment or setting.

## LOVING THE WORLD AROUND US

Finally, Monday evening will be the culmination of 1 John 4:11 as we hear a message from **Jim Cymbala**. When we are consumed and overwhelmed by God's love for us, only then are we ready to share that love with the people we lead and the communities we serve. I pray that this final time together will be an encouragement and a reminder of that truth.



### **Jimmy Scroggins**

Pastor at Family Church in South Florida; Lifeway Board Member

Jimmy needs little introduction to the Southern Baptist family. He has transitioned a traditional downtown Baptist church into one of the most dynamic and growing multisite congregations in the country. We have asked Jimmy to talk about loving the communities God has placed us in and to talk to us about the church's intersection with culture

within a diverse community.



### **Jim Cymbala**

Pastor at The Brooklyn Tabernacle in Brooklyn, New York

Even though I met Jim through his books years ago, he and his choir have been guests here at First Baptist Orlando for several years and have also held concerts at our church. Jim preached a message on love, from 1 Corinthians 13, at our church two years ago that is the best I have ever heard on what it means to love. I have asked Jim to share that same message with all of us at the Pastors' Conference.

## MUSIC AND WORSHIP

The worship portions of the Pastors' Conference will be led primarily by our First Baptist Orlando worship team. I have also invited two guests: Phil Wickham, who will lead us in a special time of worship, and Hosanna Wong, who will lead us in one selection of spoken word. For those who do not know, "spoken word" is an artform of sharing contemporary poetry in front of a live audience oftentimes performed with a musical background.

I have no desire to bring anyone into an environment that is not welcoming to them. I am communicating with our invited program guests and together we are determining the best plan going forward for each.

It is important to note that not everyone on this program aligns one hundred percent with all of my theological convictions, nor do they use the same methodologies to reach their communities that are working for us in Orlando. And yet, every person that I have asked to participate in our program is a devout follower of Jesus and has blessed me and encouraged me to know that I am loved by God and that I can love my family, my church, and the people in our



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community. I have asked them to specifically speak to this theme; one that unites us, not divides us.

From beginning to end, it is my hope that pastors would feel reminded of God's love for them and leave equipped to go back and share that love with the churches and communities they serve -- and I hope we have a little fun along the way. There will be other testimonies and panels addressing the theme throughout the day on Monday. And there will be some cool surprises along the way, like giveaways and moments of laughter and fun.

At the end of the day, my prayer is that what I remember happening to me throughout the 40+ years of attending these conferences will happen to you; you will be loved and encouraged.

*"Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another." - 1 John 4:11*

For His Glory,



Dr. David Uth, PhD  
Senior Pastor, First Baptist Orlando



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