



In times past, we called it the January Bible Study. Later, we called it the Winter Bible Study. I call it the Annual Bible Study — ABS.

The ABS is one of the best things Southern Baptists have ever done. Lifeway chooses a block of Scripture each year. It may be one of the sixty-six books, or it may be part of a book. This past ABS was Revelation 1-3. The ABS for 2020 is Jeremiah.

The ABS is like a spiritual vitamin B-12 shot. To focus on a portion of Scripture for a short period of time is an encouragement to all of us. The ABS can be an inductive training program on how to conduct any Bible Study.

I realize a pastor has the luxury of dealing with the ABS over a longer period of time. He can be more thorough than a guest and can take all the time he needs to conduct a compre-

hensive treatment of the assigned material — such as Jeremiah. I would remind all of us that sometimes less is more.

In recent years, there has been a renewed emphasis on expository preaching. I understand pastoral preaching should lean toward expository, more than topical preaching. A microscope can be very helpful in science and theology. There is a need for a telescope on occasion, but I believe for most laypeople binoculars are the most helpful.

When I went to the Holy Land in 1985, I acquired a telephoto lens for my 35 mm camera. Someone suggested I

ABS

would also need a wide-angle lens. I used the wide-angle lens most of the time. I don't think our congregations need a "deeper" knowledge of the Bible, nearly as much as they need a "broader" knowledge of the Bible.

The ABS helps us with our BWV — Biblical World View. Our beliefs determine our behavior; our convictions determine our conduct; our doctrine determines our decisions. Hermeneutics is the science of interpreting Scripture. Homiletics is the art of composing a sermon. Definitely, hermeneutics should precede homiletics. Our orthodoxy will determine our orthopraxy. Anything we do or say in the

Christian Action Commission should begin with Bible study. Our theology is the foundation upon which we build our ethics. A distorted theology can be the ether that puts a denomination to sleep. What is down in the well comes up in the bucket.

I would encourage you and your church to plan and enjoy an ABS in Jeremiah. There are many parallels between Judah and America. We must not look to Egypt. We don't have to fall to Babylon, but we must turn to Jehovah. How many Jeremiahs are among us? The ABS in Jeremiah can help us with our BWV and our 2020 vision.

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Planned Parenthood to refuse government funding

WASHINGTON (BP) — One of Planned Parenthood's government revenue streams has officially dried up — for now.

The Planned Parenthood Federation of America (PPFA) confirmed Aug. 19 it would not abide by a new rule from the administration of Republican U.S. President Donald Trump that prohibits federal family planning funds for organizations that perform, promote, or refer for abortions.

The decision, which had been expected for weeks and was announced at the deadline set by the administration, means PPFA will forfeit \$50 to \$60 million a year in order to conduct business as usual as the country's No. 1 abortion provider.

The loss of funding through Title X, the federal government's family planning program, will result in about a 10% decrease in government money for Planned Parenthood — at least while a court challenge is under way.

PPFA and its affiliates collected \$563.8 million in government grants and reimbursements in its latest financial year. The abortion giant performed more than 332,757 abortions during the most recent year for which statistics are available.

Three days before PPFA's announcement, an Arizona jury awarded a former Planned Parenthood employee three million dollars for wrongful termination after she had shared health and safety warnings with supervisors.

Federal defunding of PPFA, which reported \$1.88 billion in net assets in its latest financial report, has long been a goal of pro-life organizations and leaders of the movement applauded news of the withdrawal from Title X.

Withdrawal from Title X "shows what is truly important to [Planned Parenthood]: Care for women is expendable, but abortion is not," said Russell Moore, president of the Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC) in Nashville.

"At the same time, this new rule from the Department of Health and Human Services is a welcome move not only because it reveals Planned Parenthood's sad business model but also because it is an important step in separating taxpayer dollars from the abortion industry," Moore said in written comments for Baptist Press (BP).

"Since its announcement, we have worked to make sure the rule remained strong as we continued to call upon Congress to take legislative action," he said. "We will continue to be tireless in our witness for life, praying for the day when we as a country repent of ever propping up this storefront of death."

Chelsea Sobolik, a policy director for ERLC, told BP in written remarks, "As Planned Parenthood continues to highlight the fact that abortion is its most important service, we will continue making the case for legislative action to cut all



federal funding to this abortion industry leader.

"I'm grateful for any rule that protects life, and I hope this recent announcement will save the lives of thousands of precious little ones in the womb."

One of ERLC's priorities in its 2019 legislative agenda has been the defunding of Planned Parenthood.

Messengers to the 2017 Southern Baptist Convention's annual meeting adopted a resolution calling for the elimination of money for Planned Parenthood at all levels of government. It also denounced the organization's "immoral agenda and practices."

Planned Parenthood "showed its true colors by prioritizing abortion over family planning," said Marjorie Dannenfelser, president of the Susan B. Anthony List, in a written release. "This is a huge win for women's health."

PPFA, meanwhile, attacked

the new regulation. Alexis McGill Johnson, PPFA's acting president, described the Protect Life Rule — the name it has become known by — as "an unethical and dangerous gag rule."

"At Planned Parenthood, we refuse to cower to the Trump-Pence administration," Johnson said. She called for Congress to pass legislation to block the new rule.

The final regulation, issued in February by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), bars the use of Title X money "to perform, promote, refer for, or support abortion as a method of family planning."

The rule requires "clear financial and physical separation" between Title X programs and non-Title X programs in which abortion is promoted as a method of family planning.

The administration of Republican U.S. President Ron-

ald Reagan issued a regulation that was similar to the Protect Life Rule in the 1980s, and the U.S. Supreme Court upheld it in 1991.

The administration of Democrat Bill Clinton rescinded that rule, however.

The Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals in San Francisco ruled in a 7-4 decision July 11 the Trump administration can enforce the regulation while it is being legally challenged.

Meeting "en banc," or as a full court, the Ninth Circuit denied emergency motions to block an order from a three-judge panel of the same court that stayed preliminary injunctions barring the rule's enforcement.

The Ninth Circuit is scheduled to hear oral arguments in the case Sept. 23.

Planned Parenthood, the American Medical Association, and more than 20 states were among the parties that filed lawsuits in March to block the new HHS rule. Federal judges had blocked enforcement of the regulation before the Ninth Circuit granted the Trump administration's request for a stay enabling the rule to be enforced.

The new HHS regulation does not prohibit nondirective counseling regarding abortion, but it ends the requirement that Title X recipients must provide abortion counseling and referral. It also does not reduce Title X funds. Title X serves about four million Americans, those of low income in particular.