

# SOUTHBOUND

*In the ring or in the pulpit, pro wrestler George South's faith is no holds barred*

By **JOHN DAVIS**  
Progressive-Journal staff writer

"How many preachers you know with a wrestling sticker in his Bible?" George South, a Charlotte-based professional wrestler, whispers over his right shoulder.

South sits in the third pew on the preacher's right inside Calvary Baptist's sanctuary with his brown book of scriptures resting beside him.

It's cover is worn and family photographs are taped inside. Like its owner, it's seen many, many miles on the road traveling to armories, gyms and arenas.

Sunday, he spoke to the Jefferson congregation. Their paster — Bart Smith — has refereed South's matches.

During the 1980's, South toured with Mid-Atlantic and National Wrestling Alliance as "enhancement talent," working matches against legends like the Rock and Roll Express, Ric Flair and the Four Horsemen and Road Warriors.

South continues to perform in the ring with Exodus Wrestling Alliance and train rookies at his self-named wrestling school.

South is also a man of faith, so transitioning from the squared circle to the pulpit comes with ease to the devout Christian who ministers from a wrestling ring.

"I've never wrestled Hulk Hogan. I've never been to Wrestlemania. But that's OK.

When all the smoke clears, I know the Lord. Nothing else matters," South said.

Constantly on the road in his younger days as a professional wrestler, South's faith kept him grounded — and it still does.

"I always say I'm dumb enough to get into Heaven — even I can figure it out," South said. "People know what I believe. There is always ways that one who laughs at you because you read the Bible."

South shrugs it off. "Some guys may be telling a filthy joke and I walk in — here comes the preacher — I'm not the one you need to worry about. God just heard you."

**Drop the 'W' and 'G'  
— this is rasslin'**

South misses the days when wrestling was rasslin', not "sports entertainment."

"Anybody can buy a ring now, some people got rings in the backyard. (It) don't mean they know what they are doing," he said.

South said there aren't different styles to pro wrestling, but just a right way and a wrong way.

"Setting a table on fire and throwing somebody through it isn't a wrestling style. The object is not to get hurt," he said.

South entered the world of professional wrestling during the territorial days before

there was a national platform such as WWE and the defunct WCW to showcase talents.

Wrestling had a mystique back then — good guys (faces) and bad guys (heels) could never be seen together in public or risk destroying a heated feud taking months or years to build.

Mystique allured South in at the age of 17 and has yet to let go 27 years later.

"I answered a small ad that said 'be a professional wrestler,'" South said.

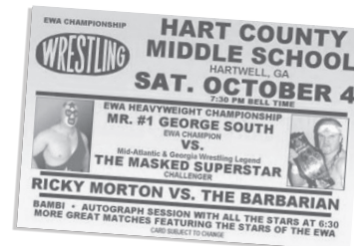
On his first day he encountered an older man, a 300-pound Samoan, a woman and midget.

"They beat the crap out of me and I had to take it. Nowadays, that would get you sued," he said.

**Fake is a four-letter word**

"Just quit figuring out how we do it and enjoy it. I don't want to know how a magician pulls a rabbit out the hat," South said. "Is your life better? It's like finding out if Santa Claus isn't real."

Sit back and enjoy the show, that's what wrestling should be, he said.



Staff photo by John Davis

Concord, N.C., professional wrestler George South ministers to people one-on-one, either inside a church or from inside a wrestling ring. South spoke Feb. 18 to Calvary Baptist Church in Jefferson about grappling with their faith.