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HMB radio announcements
receive positive response

By Sarah Zimmerman

Baptist Press
8/12/96

ALPHARETTA, Ga. (BP)--"Save the Family," a set of 12 radio public service announcements sent to 7,500 stations nationwide, is receiving favorable responses from secular and Christian stations.

Selected radio stations received a compact disc with the six 30-second and six 60-second spots in June. The 366 stations which returned the enclosed response card indicated plans to run the public service announcements a total of 3,602 times each week.

Comments on the response cards included "Great spots," "These are great. Keep them coming" and "Superb spots."

Produced by the Home Mission Board, the ads encourage commitment to families and integrity. The package asks radio stations to "Help us conserve the nation's most precious natural resource ... the American family."

Rather than presenting a direct gospel message, the spots attempt to "create a positive view of Southern Baptists," said Ron Lawson, director of the HMB media department. A voice at the end of each spot tells listeners the message is from Southern Baptists.

Churches can purchase the set of radio announcements without the reference to Southern Baptists and put their local church information in its place, Lawson said. Churches which purchase spots for that purpose will have to deliver them to local radio stations.

Lawson said he hopes the public service announcements will help establish denominational credibility in places where Southern Baptists are not strong. "Churches getting started in our mission fields need to be validated in their communities," he said.

The Federal Communications Commission requires radio stations to broadcast public service announcements to keep their licenses, but stations choose the ones to use.

To order a copy of the spots, call Home Mission Board customer services at (800) 634-2462 and request product 211-119P. The set of ads costs \$19.95.

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Promise Keepers stretch
Indianapolis dome capacity

By John Yeats

Baptist Press
8/12/96

INDIANAPOLIS (BP)--For the third straight year, more than 60,000 Promise Keepers made their way to the Indianapolis RCA Dome.

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On Friday evening of the July 26-27 rally, observers said every seat was occupied just prior to the evangelistic invitation extended by Michael Silva, an evangelist from the Chicago area.

More than 3,000 men responded to the invitation. The 1,763 decision cards indicated the majority of the decisions were first-time professions of faith.

Many Southern Baptist churches from across the Midwest participated in Indianapolis simultaneously with the New Orleans Promise Keepers conference. A satellite hook-up was used to show the joint meeting, with a combined attendance of more than 100,000. The same technology was used to connect with the Indiana State Prison in Michigan City. About 600 inmates participated and several professions of faith were registered.

The theme, "Break Down the Walls," reflected the ministry's major emphasis. Reconciliation concepts were a part of every speaker's message -- reconciliation to God, reconciliation to wife and family, reconciliation to sons, reconciliation with fellow Christians and racial reconciliation. Promise Keepers leaders' hope is to break down the walls that inhibit balanced relationships in each of the areas.

"Reconciliation isn't unique to Promise Keepers," said Steve Chevis of the Denver-based organization. "We're just putting it on the front burner."

To further emphasize the outreach to men of color, more than 3,000 scholarships were made available. When the conference began, about 800 remained available. An offering also was received for the churches burned by racially motivated arsonists. Promise Keepers hopes to work with several church groups, including Southern Baptists.

"When a church is burned the whole community is scarred," Chevis said. "There is fear and blame, and mistrust, and the church can be a factor for healing the situation. I'm talking about churches crossing racial lines I'm talking about Saturday work days where everybody brings their belts, their tools, their nails and they put up dry wall."

Wellington Boone, a popular Promise Keeper speaker and Baptist Sunday School Board author, voiced appreciation for the board's Broadman & Holman publishing his book, "Breaking Through." Southern Baptists are leading the way toward racial reconciliation with the resolution passed at the 1995 annual meeting in Atlanta. He further praised the action of Southern Baptists at this year's meeting in New Orleans for their "Arson Fund" offering. Boone said the printing of his book enables Southern Baptists to be the first church publishing house to establish a black man as an "A"-level writer.

Asked why he isn't a Baptist, Boone's refreshing response was, "No one gets to choose who leads them to the Lord. If Baptists had led my Momma to the Lord, then that's where I'd probably be today. But they didn't. Another group did. I want to work to help us see that skin color and denominational differences must not inhibit our love for Jesus."

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(BP) photos by Jordan Yeats available from the Indiana Baptist newsjournal.

**Church adds missions thrust
to its Promise Keepers trip**

By Shawn Hendricks

**Baptist Press
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INDIANAPOLIS (BP)--For this Promise Keepers group, it also was a missions trip. Fourteen men and teenagers from First Baptist Church, Franklin, Tenn., attended the July 26-27 Promise Keepers rally in the Indianapolis RCA Dome, then led small-group sessions during Sunday school at Raceway Baptist Church in Indianapolis July 28.

Joe Estes, pastor at Raceway Baptist, said the Tennesseans' trip was triggered from a mission trip to the church last summer. A group of 16 adults and 21 teens from the Tennessee church traveled to Raceway Baptist to help renovate the building and serve in outreach community projects. "They did a little bit of everything," Estes said. "They were always working."

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During their three days in Indianapolis this year, the Tennessee group slept on Raceway Baptist's floor with air mattresses and sleeping bags.

The Sunday sessions they led at the church covered topics on marriage enrichment, addictive behaviors, goal-setting, growing church leaders and concepts from the "True Love Waits" program.

Estes said he would like the group to return to Indy during next year's Promise Keepers rally. "They did a terrific job," Estes said.

Jonathan Barnes, 14, from the Tennessee church, said the Promise Keepers trip kept the group focused on accomplishing the Lord's work. "You couldn't go there for the wrong reason," he said, "because it wasn't like your girlfriend was going to be there to distract you."

Dale Schlafer, Promise Keepers vice president of pastoral ministries, said the success of each rally relies on local churches. "We can send these men home with the tools they need to be effective for Christ, but without the church they can't develop," Schlafer said.

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**Women learn of possibilities
for fixing broken marriages**

By Marv Knox

Baptist Press
8/12/96

SAN ANTONIO, Texas (BP)--"You don't have to stay in a broken marriage," family therapist Ernest Castro told participants in a summertime Hispanic women's conference. "It can be fixed."

Rather than disintegrating into divorce, most marriages can be salvaged by approaching conflict constructively, Castro said during the second annual Celebrating the Hispanic Woman Conference, July 19-20 in San Antonio, Texas.

Castro, who works with couples in Wichita, Kan., painted a bleak picture of American marriage. "Approximately 50 percent of marriages end in divorce. Fifty percent of the remainder believe the only option is to stay in a marriage that doesn't work."

Unfortunately, millions of Americans turn to hopeless solutions for failing marriages, he said. They drown themselves in alcohol, gorge themselves with food, sedate themselves with drugs or immerse themselves in work, he explained, noting, "They don't fix it."

At the core of troubled marriages is unresolved conflict, Castro continued. In every marriage, spouses bring different perspectives on conflict and varying ideas about how to handle it.

But "the only way to deal with conflict is to work through it," he stressed, noting two "paths through conflict" determine how most people try to resolve conflict.

"The automatic response is defensiveness and protection," he said. "We do this because conflict taps into our fears."

This "intent to protect" fuels further conflict, because it keeps the partners from resolving the conflict, he said.

People who reflexively protect themselves seek to avoid personal responsibility for the conflict, he said.

And although they may react passively or aggressively, they instinctively see themselves as a victim and the other person as the cause of the conflict, he reported.

In this mode, "unhappiness always is the product of unloving behavior," he said. Even if the person denies a problem exists, the result is continued conflict and unhappiness.

However, the key to resolving marital conflict is "the intent to learn," Castro said.

In trying to learn from the conflict, individuals assume responsibility for the relationship as well as their own feelings, he said. They are able to understand the different perspectives they bring to their marriage, how those perspectives shape their feelings and how to work together to build their relationship.

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"The idea is not to be defensive, but to be heard (in the conflict) and make the other person feel heard," he noted.

Another marriage counselor, Abel Ortega of McAllen, Texas, stressed that conversation -- with God and with one's mate -- is the key to overcoming conflict.

"When you have disagreements in your marriage, talk and pray until you make a decision," Ortega advised. "You will become one with discussion -- sharing your needs and desires."

Knowledge of each other is the "tool" that can change behavior for the better and diminish marital conflict, he added.

"In God's hands, you are an agent of change with your husband. Keep talking; be yourself," he told the women. "If you don't tell him (about concerns and problems in the marriage), you are taking tools that can change him away from God's hands."

Conference organizer Margarita Trevino urged conference participants to find one confidant to whom they can tell their cares and concerns.

"It's important to have one person to share what's on our hearts;" otherwise, problems cannot be processed and resolved, said Trevino, president of Christian Education and Research Institute in Keller, Texas.

In addition, she encouraged the women to seek spiritual answers to their everyday problems. "We do have to pray," she said. "We need to read the Bible."

The Hispanic women's conference attracted about 900 participants from across Texas to San Antonio, but the issues they considered transcend race and gender, Trevino stressed.

"These problems," including marital breakup, domestic violence, gangs, substance abuse and stress, "are impacting our entire community," Trevino said.

Her organization joined with several other groups -- including the Texas Baptist Christian Life Commission, Buckner Baptist Benevolences and Theo Avenue Baptist Church in San Antonio -- in sponsoring the conference.

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**Neglect is child abuse,
speakers tell conference**

By Marv Knox

**Baptist Press
8/12/96**

SAN ANTONIO, Texas (BP)--Help break the epidemic cycle of child abuse, a doctor and a social worker who treat abused children pleaded.

Intervention by caring adults is the only way to protect thousands of children from continued abuse, reported Juan Parra, a physician with the University of Texas Health Sciences Center in San Antonio, and Ester Flores, Buckner Baptist Benevolences' regional director in McAllen, Texas.

"We run across abused children every day of our lives," Parra told participants in the second annual Celebrating the Hispanic Woman Conference, July 19-20 in San Antonio, Texas.

"They look like any other child -- of any race or color, in the poorest neighborhoods and the richest -- and you never know it."

Abuse is rampant, Parra said, citing 3 million reported cases nationwide each year, and noting many cases go unreported.

Although most people think of physical injury when they think of abuse, direct physical harm accounts for only about 25 percent of all cases, he said.

In Texas, more than half of all child abuse stems from neglect, compared to 47 percent nationwide, he said. Child neglect has been defined as occurring "when those responsible at whatever level for meeting the basic needs of children fail to do so," he explained.

Common types of neglect include leaving children unsupervised in the bathtub, in a place where gasoline is accessible, at risk of electrical shock and simply at home alone.

In 1992, the last year for which data are complete, child abuse and neglect accounted for 103 deaths in Texas, he said.

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In addition to physical abuse and neglect, other sources of child abuse are sexual and emotional, he said.

A major cause of child abuse is parental substance abuse, he said. Nationwide, 10 million children are raised by addicted parents, and 600,000 of them are abused each year, he added.

Substance abuse impacts some children even before they are born, he said. This abuse results in birth defects, impaired mental and physical development, anti-social behavior and sudden infant death syndrome.

After birth, children are at risk for violence, impoverished because family resources are squandered on drugs, and subjected to parents who are mentally and physically incapacitated by drugs, Parra noted.

He pleaded for Texans to intervene to help children.

The first step is to recognize the problem exists and to be sensitive to signs of abuse, he said. Caring adults also need to report abuse to proper authorities.

He begged for community involvement. One step is to educate people about the prevalence and indicators of abuse. Another is to "empower families, and especially women in troubled homes, to be less dependent upon abusers."

The primary goal is to help children today so they can become good, caring parents themselves, thus curbing abuse in the next generation, he said.

And people must be willing to act if they hope to make a difference, Flores said.

She told of a 4-year-old child who was beaten to death by her mother, whose neighbors "didn't want to get involved," even when they heard sounds of violence and injury to the child.

"We've got to stop this violence," Flores declared. "And the only way to stop it is to call (police). Please call."

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**'Kidshare' helps children
cope with parents' divorce**

By Julie Nall

Baptist Press
8/12/96

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. (BP)--For many of the estimated 1 million American children whose parents' marriages fail each year, divorce is more devastating than death. There is a finality to death that is lacking in divorce, explained Beth Yates, a member of the Missouri Baptist Convention's Bible study team.

Early in her career, Cindy Ann Pitts, children's minister at First Baptist Church, Houston, was counseling with a young girl who was really broken over the issue of her parents' divorce.

"Katy, can I pray with you about your family?" Pitts asked the child. "No," Katy answered. "I've prayed and prayed and prayed, and Daddy's still going away."

The encounter challenged Pitts to seek a comprehensive resource to help children suffering through divorce. Finding none, she developed "KidShare: What Do I Do Now? Helping Children Deal with Divorce," a 12-week support group for children in third through sixth grades whose parents have divorced.

The overall goals of the program are:

- to provide a safe place for children to talk about their feelings.
- to lead children to discover they can trust God to help them daily in practical ways.
- to promote emotional, spiritual, social and mental health.
- to help children look forward to the future with optimism.

A support group focuses on specific emotional needs, explains a handout designed for parents of KidShare participants. Children involved in the group are encouraged to talk about their feelings and to listen actively as other children share their experiences.

The children learn to give and receive emotional support from others. The group provides a safe place where children from similar situations can share their feelings, adjust to change and learn new behavioral skills.

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The weekly sessions include homework assignments for KidShare participants to take home and work with their parents, said Carol Johnson, a divorced mother who has served as a facilitator for a group at First Baptist Church, Jefferson City, Mo. The assignments are very important because they draw the children and parents together, she said. "Divorce is an adult problem that children are forced to deal with," Yates said. She also has served as facilitator of a KidShare group at the Jefferson City church. "The approach is not to tell children they shouldn't feel what they're feeling, but to help them understand their feelings, to label them and to learn how to express them appropriately."

The group does not serve as a substitute for professional counseling, Yates emphasized. The parents' handout notes the facilitators of KidShare are not professional counselors, therapists, psychologists or psychiatrists. They are loving Christians who have displayed skills in working with children and who have a concern for children from divorced homes.

The KidShare curriculum has a strong Christian perspective, an important element to set it apart from other support groups, Johnson noted. "This is not a 'preachy' program," she said. "There is nothing condemning about the curriculum while it still tells the children that Jesus loves them."

While working to develop the KidShare material, "most of what I've learned, the children have taught me," Pitts said. "Lots of children have great healing from being able to talk about their feelings. Children feel isolated. For them, it is their own personal tragedy. Many express, 'I thought I was the only one who felt this way.'" The children also learn the divorce wasn't their fault, Johnson stated. Some kids think, "If I'd been better, this divorce wouldn't have happened," but KidShare helps them realize they are not to blame, she said.

The KidShare groups, which meet for 12 weeks, generally are divided by ages and meet for one-and-a-half-hour sessions. Pitts said every time she gets two facilitators and six children, she begins a group, sometimes having five or six groups going at once.

KidShare also can be used one-on-one between a facilitator or pastor and a child. Yates said it would be ideal for a KidShare group to be scheduled the same time as a church's adult divorce adjustment ministry group.

"There are times that parents are concerned about information that their children will share," Pitts wrote in the parents' handout. "Remember that your child, just like you, needs a safe place to talk about personal matters. Facilitators will respect and protect your family's privacy. They will remind the children weekly that the information shared in the group must not be discussed away from the group. It is amazing how well the children follow this policy."

Yates reflected that "the most amazing thing to me with the first group I've taught is that the children often don't express their feelings because they don't know how to label them. Often it is harder to talk about something you don't have a word for."

She said one child shared he had "a bad feeling inside" and he didn't know if he was angry or sad.

Through KidShare, he figured out he was feeling depressed. By the end of her first 12 weeks as a facilitator, Yates noted, the children would come early and didn't want to quit sharing at the end of a session. She attributes that to the children finding some positive adults in their lives who were there every week to listen to them -- not correct them, judge them or give them advice.

"Twelve weeks are not going to take away what a divorce has done to children," Yates said, "but hopefully it will give them some tools to deal with their feelings in the future."

"KidShare: What Do I Do Now?" is published by LifeWay Press of the Baptist Sunday School Board, 127 Ninth Ave. North, Nashville, TN 37234.

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