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News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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'Experiencing God'  
to air in Russian

Baptist Press  
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MOSCOW (BP)--The first-ever broadcast version of the discipleship program "Experiencing God" is scheduled to air over radio waves in Russia starting in April.

Broadcast versions are being developed in 10 languages.

The program will air for six months on Trans World Radio's short-wave transmitters from Albania in late evening Moscow time to cover western Russia and from Guam in mid-afternoon Moscow time to cover eastern Russia. It will also air over Radio Teos, a local FM radio station in St. Petersburg.

Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board missionary Joe DeLeon, who lives in St. Petersburg, will coordinate follow-up for the broadcasts. Russian Baptists who counsel listeners responding to "Word of Life" broadcasts by the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission will respond as well to listeners of "Experiencing God."

A publication of LifeWay Press of the Baptist Sunday School Board, "Experiencing God" was written by Henry Blackaby and Claude King. The broadcast version, which closely follows material presented in the workbook, was adapted for radio in a project coordinated by the Foreign Mission Board.

The Foreign Mission Board's development office has raised funds for developing "Experiencing God" broadcasts in five top priority languages: Arabic, Mandarin Chinese, Russian, Special English and Spanish.

Additional funds still are needed to air the Russian Experiencing God broadcasts on local radio stations in major cities in Russia, including Moscow. Interested people should contact the Foreign Mission Board at Development Office, P.O. Box 6767, Richmond, VA, or by phone, 1-800-362-1322.

### 3 SBC pastors join call for GOP to stay pro-life

By Tom Strobe

WASHINGTON (BP)--Three Southern Baptist pastors, including Convention President Jim Henry, have joined other religious leaders in calling on the major Republican presidential candidates to maintain the party's support of a constitutional amendment banning abortion.

In a recent letter, 16 evangelical and Roman Catholic leaders expressed concern about the campaign by some prominent Republicans to delete or modify the pro-life plank in the party's platform.

"As the Republican National Convention fast approaches, millions of Catholic and evangelicals will be anxiously waiting to see what route you will take on this issue," the leaders wrote. "We are praying that you will not abandon principle."

In addition to Henry, Southern Baptist pastors who signed the letter were Adrian Rogers of Bellevue Baptist Church in suburban Memphis, Tenn., and Ed Young of Second Baptist Church, Houston. Henry is pastor of First Baptist Church, Orlando, Fla.

Others signing the letter included James Dobson, president of Focus on the Family; Bill Bright, president of Campus Crusade for Christ; Charles Colson, chairman of Prison Fellowship Ministries; James Kennedy, head of Coral Ridge Ministries; Charles Swindoll, radio Bible teacher and president of Dallas Theological Seminary; and Richard John Neuhaus, a Catholic priest and president of the Institute on Religion and Public Life.

The Feb. 29 letter went to presidential candidates Robert Dole, Pat Buchanan, Steve Forbes, Alan Keyes, Lamar Alexander and Richard Lugar. Alexander and Lugar dropped out of the race March 6. It also was sent to Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich and Republican National Committee Chairman Haley Barbour.

The religious leaders said while many of them do not endorse political candidates, they believed it was their "duty to speak on moral issues, and felt it only prudent to address this issue at this time to the party that has been most consistently pro-life," according to the letter.

While they agree the "battle to protect the unborn child will be won or lost in the hearts and minds of our countrymen," the religious leaders said the legal part of the struggle also must be waged. Because the 1992 Casey v. Planned Parenthood decision shifted abortion from a constitutionally implied right of privacy, as found in the 1973 Roe v. Wade opinion, to a liberty protected under the 14th Amendment, a constitutional amendment "is the only way to reverse the most unjust Supreme Court ruling since the Dred Scott decision," which permitted slavery, the letter said.

"The Republican Party will absolutely doom its own credibility if it chooses to abandon the pro-life amendment because it will become pro-choice as a matter of law, and pro-life only in its rhetoric," the letter said. "This is not only moral schizophrenia but a classic example of political double-talk, and it will not go unnoticed by the American people."

They reminded the GOP leaders the party won all three presidential elections in the 1980s with a pro-life platform. They also pointed out no pro-life congressional candidate lost to a pro-choice candidate in the 1994 election, when Republicans regained control of both the Senate and House of Representatives.

Buchanan and Keyes have strongly advocated the platform's call for a constitutional amendment to outlaw abortion, but Dole and Forbes have avoided such a pledge.

Barbour has not responded to the letter and normally does not release such responses publicly, RNC press secretary Mary Crawford said. While Barbour has voted for the pro-life plank as a delegate to past conventions, Crawford said, the platform committee alone will determine whether it is presented to the 1996 convention in the same form. The platform committee consists of a man and woman elected by each delegation from the 50 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico, plus one representative each from three U.S. territories.

Abortion has been a divisive issue at the top of the Republican Party in the last year. Conservative leaders such as William Bennett and William Kristol have called for the party to modify its pro-life plank, while others have argued for maintaining the anti-abortion position.

Last March, Dobson warned Barbour he would do everything possible to activate Christians to oppose the party leadership's signaled willingness to back away from its pro-life position. Focus on the Family buttressed Dobson's promise with the largest direct-mail effort in the ministry's 18-year existence.

During the RNC's January meeting in San Diego, a pro-choice delegate proposed to the resolutions committee a measure encouraging open debate on the abortion issue in the platform. The committee rejected it, saying there is open debate on all issues, Crawford said.

Others signing the letter were William Ball, religious liberty lawyer; Paul Cedar, president of the Evangelical Free Church of America; Ted Engstrom, president emeritus of World Vision; Brandt Gustavson, president of the National Religious Broadcasters; John Perkins, president of the John Perkins Foundation for Reconciliation and Development; Russell Shaw, director of the Knights of Columbus; and George Weigel, president of the Ethics and Public Policy Center.

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Abortion regret started  
woman on healing path

By Alberta Lindsey

Baptist Press  
3/12/96

MIDLOTHIAN, Va. (BP)--In 1982, Janet Moss was 22, fresh out of college, unmarried and pregnant.

"I was scared. I had just graduated. My boyfriend had moved away. I panicked and made a quick decision -- a decision I have regretted ever since -- to have an abortion," she said.

"I never dreamed I would be dealing with this pain for so many years," said Moss, now 36.

Because of the guilt and anguish she had to deal with alone, she wants to help other women who are in the same position. Through her faith, she experienced healing and forgiveness and feels called to minister to women who are dealing with the emotional scars of abortion.

Moss is the volunteer director of a church-centered support group, A Woman's Abortion Recovery Encounter (AWARE), at Oak Grove Baptist Church in suburban Richmond, Va., Chesterfield County.

"We want to tell people God loves them. He wants them to have peace," said Moss, who for the past two years also has been area director of Woman Exploited by Abortion, a Christian organization.

"In my heart, I wanted to have something that is strictly a ministry," she said.

Patti Collins, wife of Oak Grove's pastor, has been involved in getting the support group started.

"Abortion has been a controversial subject, and we feel the church is an intervention to bring Jesus Christ into the lives of people," Collins said.

She also teaches a Bible study, called Search for Significance, which deals with self-worth.

"It's another tool that can be used in the AWARE ministry to help women heal," Collins said.

Moss said she sees herself as typical of other women dealing with the aftermath of abortion.

Moss, now married and the mother of a 4-year-old daughter and stepmother of a 13-year-old daughter, grew up in Richmond. She graduated from Thomas Jefferson High School and received a bachelor's degree in anthropology from the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg, Va. She also studied cosmetology and works part time as a hairdresser.

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"When I was a freshman in college, there was a girl I knew who was taking pregnant girls to get abortions. As a freshman, I told myself: 'I'm not going to be one of those women. I would never do that.' Four years later, I was in a crisis pregnancy and turned around and did what I said I wasn't going to do," she said.

The decision to abort her pregnancy affected all of her major relationships.

"It caused a rift between me and my parents. That really hurt because I loved my parents. It had its hand in me breaking up with the father of the baby. It broke down my trust in myself. I never trusted myself to make one more decision. I said: 'Janet, if you messed up on such a big thing, I can't trust you to make decisions on little things.'"

She had lost sight of what God wanted her to do, Moss said.

"It took the joy out of my life. It was like I went around with the emergency brake on and didn't know it. It was a big drag."

Moss grew up in the church and considered herself to be a Christian.

"But I walked away from the Lord and became sexually active in college," she said. "After the abortion, I stayed away from the Lord and the church. I was dealing with guilt and grief and severed myself from God. I was running away from God, and he couldn't heal me."

A Bible study group brought her back to Christ.

"During that Bible study, I made peace with my baby. I was reconciled with the Lord. I asked for my parents' blessing to tell my story publicly. I made peace with my college boyfriend and don't hold anything against him. And I mean it set me free," she said.

"It's Jesus Christ's power that can help you forgive people including yourself. It's amazing."

Although Moss still thinks about her abortion, she said it no longer controls her life. Her sense of humor has returned. And when she looks in the mirror, she sees a different person.

"It's the Lord's work," she said.

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Reprinted by permission from the Richmond Times-Dispatch. Lindsey is the newspaper's religion writer.

His tears gave way to faith  
at photography conference

By Bryan McAnally

Baptist Press  
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FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--Pat Davison, staff photographer for The Dallas Morning News, did some impressive networking at the 1995 Southwestern Photojournalism Conference. He met Jesus Christ.

Davison had been invited to the conference at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in previous years by his Christian colleague at the newspaper, Louis DeLuca. But he always found something else to do.

"It's ironic," Davison said. "I had always declined to come for some reason or another, but last year, I passed up an opportunity to go on a skiing trip and went to the conference instead."

The seminar, for both Christian and non-Christian photojournalism professionals, is an annual gathering at the Fort Worth, Texas, seminary where photo shows are presented, testimonies are given and forums are shared.

For Davison, it was the place where a broken man could receive the gift of life.

His wife, Ekimo, was pregnant with their second child and the marriage was under strain. "I was a typical male who thought my wife didn't love me anymore because of the attention she was giving to the pregnancy. I was on the verge of a breakdown when I went.

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"My wife and I had experienced a spiritual longing for over a year because of our children," Davison, 36, said. "I am from a Roman Catholic background and my wife's is Buddhist/Shinto. We had a seed of faith planted in us, but neither of us knew him."

Davison was so distraught at last year's conference that during the first show, he simply cried and didn't know why. "I know it wasn't the show," he said.

"I was so emotional, though. I started listening to the speakers. John White, from a Chicago paper, expressed the joy of serving God through his work. I became more aware of their message and began to wonder what it was these people had."

Davison then heard the testimony of Gary Fong, director of editorial graphics technology for The San Francisco Chronicle. Fong told how he led his father, who was on his deathbed, to Christ.

"I lost my own father to Alzheimer's in '92, and his witness got me to thinking how my father kept his faith through World War II and disease," Davison said.

"God was really present there that day, and he was actually touching me. I knew it was time."

Davison responded to Fong's invitation. They talked about what had happened, Fong explained the Christian life, and Davison prayed to receive Christ.

"God saved me right there," Davison said. "I asked him to come in and he did. He flooded me -- overwhelmed me. I was completely filled with his Spirit. I was afraid of falling on the floor, uncontrollably quivering."

Later that day, Davison told his wife he had been saved.

"She was shocked," he said. "I didn't know how to witness. She said she was happy for me, but it sounded so hollow. I was worried, but God gave me a peace. I started praying for her and that peace just increased."

But over the next few months, she started noticing changes in his life and began to take an analytical approach to Jesus. She read books and watched videos about the life of Christ, but still was not ready to call him Savior.

Last fall, while Davison was in Atlanta covering a Dallas Cowboys-Atlanta Falcons football game, his wife trusted Christ. He received the news over the computer he was using to transmit the pictures from the game.

"I wasn't there when she was saved," Davison said. "I think it was for the reason that she could know that her salvation had nothing to do with me."

And, he added, "since that time, our marriage has been getting better. We are falling deeper and deeper into love."

Davison credits the conference with being a catalyst for Christ. "My whole philosophy on photojournalism has changed. My focus is now on serving the Lord -- I will do whatever the Lord leads me to do."

Morris Abernathy, facilitator of forums and Southwestern photography coordinator, said this year's conference, to be held March 22-24, will address issues where God and photojournalism ethics collide.

"We'll examine ethics, look at stories and subjects and discuss how Christianity affects attitudes and the entire aspect of how this job is done," he said.

David Fite, Southwestern's director of continuing education and conference coordinator, said the seminary is an ideal setting for the event.

"There are no smutty stories here and no 'one-upmanship.' All questions will be answered. This conference is for anybody willing to share experiences. This is the only thing of its kind in the entire country."

But the conference will not be mistaken for a Sunday morning worship service, he noted.

"There is no altar call or anyone quoting the Four Spiritual Laws. The non-Christian will be comfortable because they will be accepted, but they will receive a strong Christian witness," he said.

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Featured guests for the 1996 conference include Davison; DeLuca; John White, photographer for the Chicago Sun-Times; Carol Guzy, staff photographer, The Washington Post; Bill Luster, chief photographer, Louisville Courier-Journal; Bruce Strong, staff photographer, The Orange County (Calif.) Register; Barbara Reynolds, editor, Agricultural Aviation Magazine; Mark Sandlin, director of photojournalism, Missions USA magazine; and Phyllis Thompson, managing editor, Missions USA magazine.

"For the non-Christian, the conference brings a whole new perspective on the business. Wonderful and beautiful work will be presented that is in the service of a higher call," Davison said. "To the Christian, this is to combat a media that is in the control of the enemy. It is incumbent upon us -- it is our responsibility -- to serve Christ totally. There will be work there that will challenge everybody."

For more information about this year's conference, contact Fite at Southwestern's office of continuing education, P.O. Box 22000, Fort Worth, TX 76122; telephone (817) 923-1921, ext. 2440.

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Change described as vital  
for a growing congregation

By Todd Deaton

Baptist Press  
3/12/96

TAYLORS, S.C. (BP)--Churches which embrace and respond to change are growing; those which don't, aren't, according to a research consultant for South Carolina Baptists.

"God is calling the church to take risks," said David Schmidt, of Wheaton, Ill., challenging pastors and church leaders to replace old ways of doing God's work with better approaches which -- research suggests -- will develop new vitality in their churches.

"If this research says nothing else ... it is saying to churches to abandon what you think is safe," Schmidt asserted during the three-day the state evangelism conference at First Baptist Church, Taylors, in late February.

"Discover your unique calling and mission ... . Develop your vision. Take some risks," Schmidt said. "Many problems in church growth come from using yesterday's solutions."

Schmidt's study, conducted during 1995, sought answers to three questions: What factors are causing churches to grow? What factors are working against church growth? And, what was the relationship between discipleship practices and growing churches?

An eight-page questionnaire was sent to 1,695 churches in the Southeast. South Carolina Baptist churches accounted for 82 of 446 responses.

In presenting his report booklet, titled "Celebrating God's Pattern of Change for His Church," Schmidt related a story about chopping a load of wood for several hours.

Observing that the task was becoming increasingly difficult as more and more strength was needed, Schmidt explained, "What was wrong was that I needed to sharpen the edge of the axe. As a result, I was struggling, putting more effort into the job, when in reality what I needed was a sharper edge on the axe that would make the task easier."

To counter the many forces at work in churches "dulling the edge of the axe" of their ministries and making evangelism more difficult, Schmidt called for "letting go of forms of security of ministry we've developed and with which we've grown comfortable."

For numerical growth, Schmidt's study suggested pastors should concentrate their efforts in several key areas:

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-- worship. Eighty percent of growing churches have made a change in their worship style or format in the past five years, such as the addition of contemporary music, drama, praise choruses and testimonies. Schmidt also found 39 percent of the churches that had made a change in worship services have had a turnaround in their growth.

-- assimilation. The growing churches (65 percent) and the largest churches (69 percent) were more likely to have made an intentional change recently in how they assist newcomers discovering spiritual gifts and in finding a place of service or ministry.

-- disciple-making. Twenty-eight percent of the churches responding did not have organized training in discipleship, while 72 percent did. Churches experiencing a growth of 10 percent or more annually reported a higher percentage of new Christians in discipleship training programs.

-- small groups. Most of the fastest-growing churches (72 percent) have small-group ministries, while fewer of the plateaued churches (51 percent) or declining churches (49 percent) do.

Among Schmidt's other significant findings were:

-- Large events are the primary way people enter churches. Special outreach events like crusades, concerts and dinner theaters, and ministries such as sports teams, food pantries and special contemporary services, should make a direct appeal for participants to make a decision for Christ.

-- There is a relationship between the age of a church and its growth pattern. Research suggests growing churches were more likely to be young churches. This did not mean older churches cannot grow, but they will likely find growth more difficult because of resistance to change.

-- There is hope for any church in any setting. While growing churches were more likely to be larger congregations in areas where the community is experiencing growth, Schmidt found growing churches in every size category and in town or rural settings.

The survey noted when churches made their worship more user-friendly or culturally relevant, those churches experienced growth. "Churches of any size can do this," Schmidt said.

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Deaton is the new associate editor of The Baptist Courier, South Carolina Baptists' newsjournal.

FMB's Robert O'Brien  
plans early retirement

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RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--Robert O'Brien, senior overseas correspondent for the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board, has announced plans for early retirement effective Aug. 31.

O'Brien, 56, was managing editor of the board's news office and the Richmond bureau of Baptist Press from 1989 until September 1995, when he accepted a senior correspondent position created during a communications office reorganization.

He will do contract work for the board as a writer, editor and communications consultant; take similar assignments from other organizations; and explore other opportunities in communications.

"I deeply regret Robert's decision to leave his position as senior correspondent based overseas," said Louis Moore, associate vice president of communications. "He and I worked diligently to shape this job to his specifications and requests, and I was looking forward to him having a bright future in this job. He is a very talented reporter and writer. I'm glad he has agreed to be available to us for free-lance work, and I'm sure we will keep him quite busy."

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At some future point, O'Brien said, he may be available for a similar opportunity with the board or for another role. "'Early retirement' is a technical term. I'll continue in Christian service, and I'm glad that includes continuing involvement in Southern Baptist foreign missions," he said.

"The Foreign Mission Board gave me an exciting and challenging opportunity to work on the front lines of missions journalism for more than half my 31-year career with Southern Baptists," O'Brien said. "It allowed me to fulfill a longtime dream of developing and launching a worldwide system of Christian foreign correspondents. That was a great experience, and I'm grateful for it."

The new senior overseas correspondent role would have based the O'Brien family in Cyprus with a worldwide assignment.

"That also would have been a great opportunity for service," O'Brien said. "My family and I have prayerfully and in good faith sought God's guidance about this role. Because of important family considerations, we have come to realize the timing isn't right to set a definite date for moving overseas."

A native of South Carolina, O'Brien joined the Foreign Mission Board staff in 1980 after seven years as news editor for Baptist Press, the Southern Baptist Convention news service in Nashville, Tenn.

He came to the board to design and develop his proposal for the overseas correspondent system that now includes missionary journalists based in Europe, Africa, Asia and the Americas. He and his wife, Shirley, and their sons, Eric and Paul, spent two years, 1982-84, field testing the proposal from a base in Nairobi, Kenya. As managing editor, he supervised the board's day-to-day news operation and continued to oversee the correspondent system.

O'Brien is widely recognized for his skills in written communication. In 38 years as a journalist, he has received 64 awards in communications, including more than 40 for writing.

With Tanzania agricultural missionaries Doug and Evelyn Knapp, he wrote the Broadman Press book "Thunder in the Valley." It tells the story of the Knapps' 26-year ministry, which taught hungry people to feed themselves and produced more than 58,000 baptisms and 350 new churches between 1978 and 1988 alone.

O'Brien twice served as a visiting professor of communications at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky.; has directed newsroom and media operations for a number of national and international events; and wrote the chapter on media relations in the Religious Public Relations Council's national handbook.

He is a graduate of Washington and Lee University in Lexington, Va., and earned master's degrees from Northwestern University's Medill School of Journalism in Evanston, Ill., and Southern Baptist Seminary.

Before joining Baptist Press in 1973, he worked for seven years as a reporter and editor on newspapers in Newport News, Va., and Richmond, and then for eight years on the editorial and communications staffs of the Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission in Memphis, Tenn., and the Baptist General Convention of Texas in Dallas.

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(BP) photo (mugshot) mailed to state Baptist newspapers 3/11/96 by the Richmond bureau of Baptist Press.

#### FIRST PERSON

Muslim villager's question  
demanded missionary's courage

By Tony Lynn

Baptist Press  
3/12/96

MALI HAUSA, Niger Republic (BP)--The venerable village chief posed some unexpected questions: "Why speak only to Yaye's family about this Jesus? Why not explain Jesus to everyone?"

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The villagers gathered around us in response to their leader's command. The women sat and whispered to our left. The children were in front of us some distance away. The men lounged upon mats to our right. An enormous tree in the center of the village provided our midday shade. Jamie, my wife, prayed silently. The Islamic mosque that represented what we were up against was just behind the anxious crowd.

Earlier that morning, Yaye had received Christ after two of our missionary colleagues witnessed to him. Someone traveled through their village from time to time with a Bible. Yaye and the people enjoyed the stories but had a difficult time understanding. We were in his village at his invitation.

I preached from Acts 8. All of us seemed to be reliving the story of Philip and the Ethiopian. To me, the message appeared to be a jumble of English, French and Zarma, but amazingly everyone was listening with rapt attention. Jamie's prayers were having effect. Even the smallest of the babies was quiet. The animals of the village were still.

When I closed the message by inviting them to follow Jesus Christ like the Ethiopian, my expectations were too small. The men chattered among themselves for 10 minutes. Suddenly the discussion stopped, and they quickly rearranged their mats directly in front of us. They sat shoulder to shoulder as if they were about to say their Muslim prayers.

One of the oldest in the group drew two parallel lines in the sand. Then he said, "There are two ways to God. One is the Muslim way and the other the Christian way, correct?"

Immediately I was afraid. I saw the seriousness that I was in this remote village with Jamie and another missionary woman, but our exact location was unknown to anyone. What should I say to this definitive question?

There was really no doubt as to what to say. I only feared the possible consequences. I firmly stated, "There is only one way to God!" Then I cited John 14:6 in Zarma, where Jesus said, "Ay ga ti fonda nda cimo nda fundi" ("I am the way, the truth, and the life ...").

The elder surveyed the faces of his friends. Afterward his stare fell upon me. He responded, "I knew there could only be one way and Jesus must be that way!" He smiled.

That day 14 men in that small village, Mali Hausa, decided to follow Jesus. As they prayed, they lifted their open palms toward the sky. It was as if God were pouring living water into their cupped hands. Then at the end of their prayers, they gently rubbed their faces as if applying a fragrant ointment.

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Lynn is a missionary with the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board in Niger Republic.

In teaching, microbiologist  
found new career ambitions

By Elaine Herrin Onley

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CLEVELAND, Ga. (BP)--He entered the University of Georgia with his eyes on a medical career as a veterinarian, but one day in 1989, when Jerry McCullough walked into a ninth-grade classroom as a substitute teacher, "God stamped indelibly on my heart and mind his direction for my life. I knew that I would be a teacher."

There were many miles and many career opportunities between the Atlanta native's original personal goal and what he calls "God's goal," which has taken him to his present position as assistant professor of biology at Truett-McConnell College.

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He earned bachelor's and master's degrees in microbiology at the University of Georgia, where he has entered the doctoral program in science education. While at the university, he was offered a high school teaching and coaching position in Hall County. "I wanted to be in medical microbiology, not in teaching," McCullough said, explaining why he turned the teaching job down in 1975 and, instead, worked as a laboratory and X-ray technician and held a graduate teaching assistantship in microbiology.

During the next few years -- "searching years" -- as the professor calls them, he supervised microbiology departments at private chemical labs in Atlanta. From there the registered microbiologist became a partner in a small laboratory computing company.

Then came the day he agreed to substitute teach for a friend. And the rest is history.

There is a strong parallel between McCullough's professional career and his spiritual pilgrimage, and for him the lines came together when he entered the teaching ministry at Truett-McConnell, a Baptist-affiliated college in Cleveland, Ga.

Jerry and his wife, Sharon, were members of a Methodist church in Lawrenceville, Ga., when he was asked to teach (!) a Sunday school class. A substitute session in a "precious older ladies' class" began a seven-year journey with them in studying the Bible as never before. The result of that was a time when he "fully allowed Christ to become Lord of my life." The teaching/coaching job in Hall County reopened, and this time Jerry said yes.

He and his wife and four children moved to adjacent White County, where he later took a position with the local high school there. That's when the parallel lines crossed -- first, there was an adjunct position at Truett-McConnell, which is in White County, then a full-time position. In his first year on faculty, he was voted "most outstanding male teacher" by the graduating class.

In moving to White County, the McCulloughs found a spiritual home at First Baptist Church. While deeply involved at the college, where he not only teaches, serves on five committees and is assistant baseball coach, the professor holds key leadership positions at First Baptist Church, including Sunday school director and teacher; chairman of the building and properties committee; and director of the nursing home ministry. He also is a Gideon and serves his community on the county park and recreation advisory board.

As far as his teaching is concerned, what matters most to the Christian biology professor? McCullough doesn't have to think twice: "I measure classroom accomplishment only through responses of the students: How well do they know the subject material? Have they become excited about learning? Has there been a positive change in their attitude -- or vision -- of their future? ... Do they know that Christ is the center of my life, and that all real honor, praise and glory go to him?"

When he gets the right answers, McCullough affirms: "My calling is sure."

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Onley is director of college relations at Truett-McConnell College.

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