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**Missionary leads family
through healing odyssey**

By David Williard

**Baptist Press
11/13/96**

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (BP)--Miracles can be huge.

Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board missionary Nancy Watts knows. The fact that her husband, Wade, and her 9-year-old son, Marcus, are alive today is proof enough of that. By all accounts they should have died Feb. 1 when the car the family was traveling in was destroyed in a head-on collision on a mountain road outside Lima, Peru.

It was a miracle no one was killed.

As it was, both Wade and Marcus were left in grave condition, their minds in comas, their odds for survival slim.

But that was eight long months ago. Now, as she brings her family through the slow process of healing in Memphis, Tenn., she finds miracles also are little things, small blessings that accumulate day by day.

The recovery of Marcus has been amazing. Physically and mentally he is back to 90 percent. With a little help, he is adjusting to the fourth grade at Macon Road Baptist School, is making new friends, is dealing, along with his brother, Joshua, 8, with the pain of missing his father.

Her husband's progress has been much slower. After the accident, weeks went by before he could be flown back to the United States: brain and internal injuries made the lengthy flight too risky. Finally medical authorities decided to move him. But even then, while his body was stabilizing, it was unclear whether his mind would heal.

Every day Nancy visited the hospital. "I would talk, tell him about all that was going on, but we weren't getting any answers from him. ... We didn't know if he understood what we said. I felt like he did, but there was no way we could be sure," she says.

Finally a breakthrough came: He was able to respond to statements by blinking his eyes. Seizing this opportunity, they worked out a system in which he would blink once for yes, twice for no. By asking him specific questions, Nancy finally was assured that his memory was intact. It was the first hopeful thing.

Such signs of progress have kept Nancy's situation bearable. But she has had to be strong in ways that before the accident she would have thought impossible. Circumstances demand it. The children depend on it.

Although Marcus is recovering steadily, he still has special needs. His short-term memory suffers. The teachers at his school have been helpful, modifying assignments to help him feel successful. But he does not want to be different; he wants things to come easily, as they did for him before.

Nancy tries to be patient. In late September, when Joshua got a bicycle for his birthday, Marcus wanted to ride. His first attempts were futile. He kept falling off. Exasperated, he became impossible to console. "The next day he did fine. He just took off," Nancy says. "Things like that are frustrating, trying to encourage him until he masters the things he wants to do."

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Beyond his frustration in not being able to do things is the problem of needing to understand why things are different.

"Marcus knows that God saved him, that he was very close to dying and that God spared his life." Nancy says. "But he misses Peru and his home a lot. That's where he's coming from: 'Why do we have to be here? Why did it have to happen?' It's tough for me. I have no answer for him. God did not cause it, but for some reason he allowed it to happen, and we just don't know why."

The questions do not seem to bother Joshua as much, although he, too, does miss Peru. Daily the family talks about friends and the missionary "family" there.

Birthdays and special days are the hardest. On Joshua's birthday, missionary co-worker Kathy Phillips sent a box of cookies from Peru. Nancy suggested Joshua respond by letter. His note "read something like, 'I hope that you're doing good and that you keep praying for my dad so that we can go back to Peru to visit you,'" Nancy recounts.

Nancy, too, is eager to return. She has found much strength in the prayers of friends and colleagues. "If people hadn't been praying, where would I be? Would we be this far along in the recovery process?" Recently one of Wade's therapists called his progress a miracle. "I totally agree with that, and I think it's because God is answering people's prayers."

The experience has drawn her closer to God. "As I look back, I can see how he has carried me each step. I realize that being faithful to God even in the difficult times is the best decision one can make," she says.

"The miracle is happening," she continues. "First we got one in Marcus, and now it appears Wade is (healing), too. We're just going to keep on praying and working really hard, see how far we can get, because no one really knows."

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(BP) photos (2 horizontal) and cutlines mailed 11/13/96 to state Baptist newspapers and posted in SBCNet News Room by the Richmond bureau of Baptist Press.

Al Mohler, J.C. Watts among key '40-and-younger' leaders

Baptist Press
11/13/96

CAROL STREAM, Ill. (BP)--R. Albert Mohler Jr., president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, and Rep. J.C. Watts Jr., R.-Okla., are among five Southern Baptists named by Christianity Today as "Up & Comers, 50 Emerging Christian Leaders, 40 and Younger."

Other Southern Baptists named to the list are Daniel L. Akin, Southern Seminary's vice president for academic administration and dean of the school of theology; David P. Gushee, ethics professor at Union University, a Baptist-related college in Jackson, Tenn.; and contemporary Christian singer Rebecca St. James.

The evangelical magazine, which carried the article Nov. 11, said in a news release it solicited nominations from 1,000 Christian leaders nationwide, then made its final selections.

Of Mohler, 37, and Akin, 39, the magazine wrote:

"On August 1, 1993, 33-year-old Al Mohler stepped to the helm of his denomination's flagship seminary, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary (Louisville, Ky.), took the wheel, and made a strong turn to the right. The speed and velocity of that turn threw some faculty, staff, and students off-balance -- a few were thrown overboard. Mohler, foot on the gas, never looked back. His goal, he says, is 'nothing less than a recovery of the tradition and conviction upon which the institution was established.'

"Mohler recently asked Daniel Akin to become his right-hand man. Akin is the protege of Paige Patterson, one of the original architects of the SBC conservative resurgence. 'Al's so serious, he sleeps in three-piece pajamas,' says James Merritt, a Baptist pastor and friend of both Mohler's and Akin's. 'Danny is the perfect foil to Al. He's got the people skills and warmth to administer the president's marching orders.' Akin interprets those marching orders as 'the development of apostle Pauls, men with keen minds and warm evangelistic hearts. Theological education without evangelistic zeal ushers in pride. Zeal without theological will gives way to fanaticism. Both are essential at Southern.'"

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Mohler, before assuming Southern's presidency, was editor of The Christian Index, Georgia Baptists' newsjournal. Akin, who also is associate professor of Christian theology at Southern, formerly was vice president of student services, dean of students and assistant professor of Christian theology at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Wake Forest, N.C.

Watts, 38, an African American and ordained Southern Baptist minister, was first elected in Oklahoma's 4th District in 1994 -- "the first black Republican since Reconstruction elected to Congress from south of the Mason-Dixon Line," according to Christianity Today. Watts was re-elected Nov. 6 with 58 percent of the vote. The magazine noted Watts' district is 88 percent white and 70 percent Democratic.

Watts, who formerly was a youth minister, is a member of Sunnyside Baptist Church, Del City, in suburban Oklahoma City.

Christianity Today noted Watts has squarely identified himself as part of the Christian Right, although he "has begged the GOP to 'go slow' on affirmative action, while promoting the philosophy behind his Community Renewal Project: 'The answer for the poor community is to use the tax code to encourage investment in poor communities, to encourage home ownership in those communities, and -- the most important thing -- to remove the red tape from the government resources available for the task,' he says. 'Let's allow the neighborhood and faith-based organizations, the people who have the same zip code as those who need the help, to help solve some of the problems. The faith-based organizations are the ones really getting results.'"

The magazine added that Watts has kept a campaign vow to commute home every weekend to be with his wife and their five children.

Gushee, 34, who left Southern Seminary's faculty for Union University earlier this year, became interested in ethics when he saw a film on the Holocaust as a high school student and "was shattered to know I lived in a world where people could do this to other people," Christianity Today quotes him as saying. "So when I became a Christian, I was very practically and ethically oriented. I believe that if Christianity was true, it must hold the answers to human suffering. Gushee, a former staff member of Evangelicals for Social Action, has written a book, "The Righteous Gentiles of the Holocaust," examining why some Christians under Hitler helped Jews but others didn't.

In the pro-life arena, the magazine also recounted: "Two years ago, when David Gushee and his wife learned the baby they were expecting would be stillborn, they chose to have labor induced rather than 'have the fetus dismembered by an abortion doctor.' The procedure, they felt, 'would have been an offense to the dignity of our child's life.'"

Of St. James, 19, a member of First Baptist Church, Franklin, Tenn., Christianity Today writes: "Contemporary Christian singer Rebecca St. James has been described as part Amy Grant, part Mother Teresa, and part Billy Graham -- with some smoke and lasers thrown in. After cutting her first album at age 16, she became a Dove Awards nominee for Best New Artist. More recently her second album, GOD, along with her advocacy for Compassion International and her mission to summon teenagers to 'be sold out for God,' has established her as a rising force in Christian music and ministry."

The magazine recounted, "Born in Australia, she moved with her family to America in 1991. When her father's business venture fell through, the family members found themselves cleaning homes for grocery money and stuffing their clothes into bed sheets to sleep on. The experience of seeing God provide during that time energized Rebecca to reach her generation for Christ. 'Can you picture this?' she asks at her concerts. Then she relays a vision reminiscent of Daniel 3 where Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego face the furnace unless they bow before idols: 'Our generation has its faces in the dirt bowing down to the idols of materialism and selfishness. But you and I are like this' -- she clenches her eyes, throws her head back, and reaches heavenward with outstretched arms and open palms. 'We will not bow.'"

Among other key evangelicals on the Christianity Today list are Ralph Reed, executive director of the Christian Coalition; Lisa C. Barnes, founder of Neighbors Who Care, a ministry to assist crime victims affiliated with Prison Fellowship; dc Talk members Toby McKeehan, Michael Tait and Kevin Smith; A.C. Green Jr., forward for the Phoenix Suns; Reggie White, defensive end for the Green Bay Packers and a lay minister in Knoxville, Tenn.; race relations leader Derek Perkins of Pasadena, Calif.; Danny Cortes, program officer for Pew Charitable Trusts; and Lee Grady, executive editor of Charisma magazine who grew up a Southern Baptist in Montgomery, Ala.

**Texas Baptists re-elect Wade
by 2-1 margin over Scarborough**

By Ken Camp & Dan Martin

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--Messengers to the 1996 meeting of the Baptist General Convention of Texas elected the incumbent as president, a pioneering African American pastor as first vice president, and an east Texas layman as second vice president at their 111th annual meeting at Fort Worth's Tarrant County Convention Center.

All three officers, who had been endorsed by the moderate Baptists Committed organization, won by at least a two-to-one margin over candidates supported by Southern Baptists of Texas, a group supportive of current Southern Baptist Convention leadership.

With little opposition and even less discussion, the 7,331 messengers adopted a \$43.5 million budget and approved the report of a special committee on messenger seating. But after considerable debate, a constitutional amendment to link messenger representation to financial support for the BGCT failed to receive the required two-thirds majority.

Charles Wade, pastor of First Baptist Church, Arlington, received 4,583 votes (66 percent) for a traditional second one-year term, over 2,308 votes (34 percent) for Rick Scarborough, pastor of First Baptist Church, Pearland.

Messengers gave Marvin C. Griffin, pastor of Austin's Ebenezer Baptist Church, 3,387 votes (68.4 percent) for first vice president. Terry Fox, pastor of Gardendale Baptist Church, Corpus Christi, received 1,567 votes (31.6 percent).

James Kolb, a layman at Tyler's Green Acres Baptist Church and president of the Texlan Oil Co., was elected second vice president with 2,829 votes (66.8 percent) over 1,406 (33.2 percent) for David Galvan, pastor of Primera Nueva Vida Church, Garland.

The Cooperative Program statewide budget approved by messengers is an increase of \$811,375 (1.9 percent) over the 1996 budget. The \$43.5 million budget is strictly for the BGCT portion of the receipts, but it includes a provision that undesignated gifts from Texas Baptist churches be allocated 67 percent for BGCT-related causes and 33 percent for Southern Baptist Convention worldwide causes unless churches direct otherwise.

The budget includes \$1,575,940 for new-church support; more than \$10 million to help share the gospel and strengthen churches; more than \$5.6 million to minister to human needs; about \$20 million to Christian education and related ministries to equip believers and strengthen families; and about \$6 million for missions and ministry support.

BGCT executive board chairman Robert Campbell, pastor of Houston's Westbury Baptist Church, devoted part of his report to discussing the Texas Baptist approach to world hunger relief. The plan approved earlier this year by the executive board allows Texas Baptists to fund world hunger ministries on a project-by-project basis rather than sending 80 percent of the funds to the SBC Foreign Mission Board and 20 percent to the Home Mission Board.

In addition to channeling funds through the FMB and HMB, the program adds new funding for Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, Baptist World Alliance and Texas Baptist associations of churches' hunger projects. Texas Baptist funding for FMB and HMB hunger ministries, meanwhile, will be cut to \$176,000 in 1996 from \$524,000 in 1995.

Citing figures for hunger giving from Texas churches, Campbell told messengers, "The results have been overwhelming. Contributions so far this year are up 25.4 percent, while they had been falling about 15 percent per year for the past several years."

"Texans, you are still making a difference," he said, noting the vast majority of the funds still are channeled through the Southern Baptist FMB and HMB, and still represent "a dollar in, a dollar out."

"A hungry person is a hungry person, no matter where they are, and no one has a corner on the feeding of the hungry," he added.

Messengers heard and approved with little opposition and only minimal discussion a report from a messenger seating study committee. The committee, chaired by Hollie Atkinson, pastor of First Baptist Church, Marshall, was created in 1995 after a motion was made to deny seating to messengers from churches that have practicing homosexuals serving as pastors or deacons.

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The committee recommended no change be made to the BGCT constitution because the means of excluding messengers from churches already is in place.

Atkinson noted the committee went beyond its assignment to speak to the matter of homosexuality, and had three aims which were to express opposition to homosexuality as an appropriate sexual expression, to support Baptists who are ministering to homosexuals, and to "say to homosexuals that they are not beyond God's grace."

A move to tie messenger participation at the BGCT annual meeting to money contributed to the "adopted budget" of the convention failed to receive the necessary two-thirds majority vote.

The move to require churches to give to the convention's adopted budget came as an amendment to Article III of the BGCT Constitution, and was presented by Cecil Ray, a messenger from Crestview Baptist Church, Georgetown, retired executive director of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina.

Constitutional amendments require a two-thirds vote at two successive conventions. The proposal received 1,695 affirmative votes (57.26 percent), while 1,265 voted against it.

In presenting his recommendation, Ray said the action was intended to tie messenger participation to the stated goals and purpose of the BGCT.

Roger Deerinwater, messenger from First Baptist Church, Archer City, opposed the action, saying he did not want the BGCT "determining what we have to give to be considered faithful messengers."

An effort was made to refer the matter to the Effectiveness and Efficiency Committee which currently is looking at the work of the convention. Wayne Allen of First Baptist Church, Carrollton, supported the referral, while Jerold McBride of First Baptist Church, San Angelo, opposed it. The motion to refer was defeated, and Wade ordered a ballot vote.

At a breakfast meeting prior to the business session, moderate leader David Currie endorsed the proposal. Linking messenger participation to financial participation helps ensure that churches which do not give to the annual budget won't make decisions on how the money given by other churches is spent.

Conservative leaders said the effort to tie messenger participation to giving to the adopted budget is similar to an action taken by the Baptist General Association of Virginia which resulted in the formation of an alternate state convention this fall.

Money also came into play in another lengthy debate as messengers discussed a motion presented Monday by Aaron J. Meraz of Tyler Street Baptist Church, Jacksonville, to take a "love offering" for world hunger of which 100 percent would go to the SBC Foreign Mission Board. His motion noted world hunger funds distributed by the BGCT under a new formula approved by the executive board neglect some FMB projects.

Meraz's motion was amended by James L. Price of Broadway Baptist Church, Fort Worth, to direct funds for a "love offering" through the BGCT channels rather than the FMB exclusively.

Deerinwater commented that he was participating in an "historic event --- the BGCT refusing to take a love offering" and asked that the whole matter be resolved by just passing the plate and letting those who want to give to give and those who do not want to, to not give.

Price's amendment was adopted and then the love offering was approved by a two-thirds vote required to amend the established order of business which had been adopted Monday.

In other business, messengers approved resolutions calling for a moratorium on any expansion of legalized gambling in Texas; recognizing stewardship of creation; calling on elected officials to "set high standards of conduct and ethics;" and urging churches and ministers to settle differences "in a Christ-like manner" rather than through forced termination.

The next meeting of the convention will be Nov. 10-11 in Austin.

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NEWS ADVISORY: A bomb threat phoned to 911 forced a 45-minute evacuation of about 7,000 messengers to the Georgia Baptist Convention Nov. 12 at the Reaves Arena in Perry. And, in a 2,566-1,366 vote, messengers approved a resolution censuring Kirby Godsey, president of Mercer University, for his book, "When We Talk About God ... Let's Be Honest," which has been widely disputed as outside Baptist doctrinal norms. Godsey was accorded an opportunity to address the convention before the vote. Metro Atlanta pastor Frank Cox was elected GBC president. A subsequent news story will appear in Baptist Press.

W.Va. Baptists hike giving to Southern Baptist causes

BRIDGEPORT, W.Va. (BP)--Messengers to the West Virginia Convention of Southern Baptists voted an increase of 18.7 percent in the state's Cooperative Program giving to Southern Baptist national and international ministries during their annual meeting Nov. 1-2 at Evangel Baptist Church, Bridgeport, W.Va.

Of an anticipated \$613,764 in Cooperative Program giving next year from the state's 169 congregations, 35 percent will be forwarded to SBC causes, up from this year's 29.5 percent of budget.

The convention's overall budget will be \$1,786,798, a 10 percent increase over 1996.

The increase in Cooperative Program giving affirms a vote by the convention last year to take the step, said Jere Phillips, the convention's executive director, said in an interview.

"It's a statement of faith in what I call the Abraham principle, that we're blessed in order to be a blessing to all the world," Phillips said. "We want to provide an example to other conventions that now is an historic time worldwide -- a time to be reaching out and now drawing back."

The convention voted a number of years ago to increase its Cooperative Program gifts to SBC causes by a half-percent each year, Phillips said, "but we felt that pace was too slow, that we needed to make one big jump."

In other action, the 229 messengers in attendance established a three-year partnership with South Carolina Baptists; a West Virginia Baptist Bible Institute, to offer seminary extension courses; and a West Virginia Bivocational Ministers Fellowship.

In a resolution addressing the link to South Carolina, West Virginia messengers committed to "affirm and undergird this partnership agreement with our prayers, our verbal support and by engaging in partnership ministries." The messengers noted "this agreement will advance the cause of Christ in West Virginia, South Carolina and around the world."

During his convention report, Phillips challenged West Virginia Baptists to start 175 churches in the next 10 years, thus doubling the convention's current number, in addition to creating an additional 500 satellite congregations from the churches led by lay ministers.

Phillips told Baptist Press the new Bible institute will offer nontraditional training to ministers and lay ministers -- through mentoring and using the SBC computer network, SBCNet -- "to provide training across our state for those who could not get it otherwise." The institute, which won't have a campus or full-time professors, will be a ministry of the convention, not a separate institution, Phillips said.

Messengers also adopted resolutions expressing opposition to any expansion of gambling in West Virginia; prayer for personal and U.S. spiritual awakening; support for African American churches seeking to recover from arsonists' attacks; opposition to "the humanistic view of evolution" and affirmation of the biblical account of creation.

All officers were elected by acclamation: president, Mark McClung, pastor of Southern Baptist Fellowship, Summersville; first vice president, Kenny Stidham, pastor of Good Shepherd Baptist Church, Scott Depot; second vice president, Allen Shouse, pastor of East Williamson Baptist Church, Williamson; and recording secretary, Fred Morgan, a layman from Fairlawn Baptist Church, Parkersburg.

Next year's meeting will be Nov. 7-8 at North Charleston Baptist Church, Charleston.

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Reported by John Adams and Art Toalston.

Key Virginia church realigns with new conservative group

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11/13/96

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--One of Virginia's largest Southern Baptist congregations has voted to affiliate exclusively with the Southern Baptist Conservatives of Virginia, a conservative state convention formed in September.

The 1,800-member Grove Avenue Baptist Church in Richmond voted Oct. 27 to end a 128-year association with the Baptist General Association of Virginia and join the SBCV. The church ranks seventh in Virginia in financial contributions to denominational causes.

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Of the nearly 300 Grove Avenue members who voted on the issue, 53 percent favored an exclusive alignment, reported pastor Ron Boswell; 39 percent favored ties with both the SBCV and BGAV; and 8 percent favored remaining aligned with the BGAV.

A number of Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board personnel maintain membership at Grove Avenue, including board President Jerry Rankin and Senior Overseas Vice President Avery Willis.

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**Williams College receives
\$700,000 gift from estate**

**Baptist Press
11/13/96**

WALNUT RIDGE, Ark. (BP)--Williams Baptist College, Walnut Ridge, Ark., has received its largest estate gift ever from the late Melvin and Mildred Callahan of Walnut Ridge. WBC's portion of the estate is valued at just over \$700,000, according to college President Jerol Swaim.

"Such a generous gift would be a major step forward for any institution. For Williams, it is monumental," Swaim said in a Nov. 11 news conference. Founded in 1941, the college has 562 students and 25 full-time faculty members and is affiliated with the Arkansas Baptist State Convention.

Because of the Callahans' longstanding generosity toward Williams, Swaim said a new set of married student apartments will be named for them.

The bulk of the estate gift, about \$500,000 is being set aside for scholarships. "What this means is that interest from the Callahan gift will provide scholarships to countless worthy students," Swaim said. "It is a fitting legacy to two people who gave so much of their lives to this college. In passing, they have assured that the lives of many others will be enriched."

Portions of the remainder of the gift will be used on various campus beautification projects, the president said.

The Callahans lived nearly all their lives in Walnut Ridge. Melvin Callahan owned farms in the area and operated a cotton gin at one time. Mildred Callahan was a popular beautician and barber. They had been supporters of Williams for many years. He died several years ago, and she died in October of 1995.

The Callahans had no children, and Swaim thanked their nephew, Henry Deeter of Kennett, Mo., for his help in resolving the estate. And he acknowledged the work of a previous Williams president, saying, "I also need to thank one of my predecessors, Dr. Jack Nicholas, who developed this relationship with the Callahans and helped build their love for Williams Baptist College while he was president." Nicholas was president of the college from 1973-91.

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**Postmodernism critiqued
by Midwestern lecturer**

By James A. Smith Sr.

**Baptist Press
11/13/96**

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (BP)--"Can postmodern horses be led to water?" or, put another way, "Can the Christian lead a postmodernist to Christ?"

Those were questions posed by evangelical theologian Millard Erickson who lectured on postmodernism Nov. 5-8 at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Erickson, in the Burlan A. Sizemore Memorial Lectureship in Biblical Studies, analyzed four approaches to postmodernism, an emerging philosophy which many scholars argue has eclipsed the previously prevalent worldview known as modernism.

Although the gospel message does not change, "our world keeps changing, it keeps moving on," Erickson said. "And as responsible Christians who want to minister effectively in this world, we must be aware of those kind of changes."

Although some would question the relevance of the debate about postmodernism, Erickson said "this is not just an abstract, theoretical kind of thing."

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He noted evangelical pollster George Barna has found 30 percent of self-identified evangelicals or "born-again" respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, "There is no such thing as absolute truth. Different people can define truth in different ways and also be right."

Erickson said the influence of this type of postmodern thinking can be found throughout American society and within academia in many disciplines, including theology.

Features which characterized modernity, according to Erickson, included an emphasis on rationality and the objective nature of truth, an emphasis on the individual, an optimistic view that the world is getting better, naturalistic philosophy and humanistic thinking.

Under postmodernism, in contrast, knowledge is conditioned by circumstances, aspects of the human personality like intuition and hunches are emphasized over rationality, knowledge is not inherently good and there is a pessimistic outlook on the future and an emphasis on community over individuality.

Erickson noted Thomas Oden, a Methodist evangelical thinker, dates the emergence of modernity to 1789 with the fall of the Bastille during the French Revolution, while the beginning of postmodernism may be marked by the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989.

To illustrate the various approaches to postmodernity which some evangelicals and the broader theological world have adopted, Erickson altered the question he addressed recently at an Evangelical Philosophical Society panel discussion: "Can deconstructed horses be led to water?"

Understanding that "deconstruction" can be thought of as postmodernism, Erickson noted four answers to the question which prevail today:

-- First, "Yes, it can be done, but it has to be deconstructed water." In other words, the message of the gospel, the deconstructed water, must be changed with this approach.

"It means that we have to make modifications in the Christian message, in its substance, in its content," Erickson said in rejecting this approach, noting "there are a number of points at which radical postmodernism conflicts with the Christian message."

-- Second, "Yes, we can lead deconstructed horses to water but we have to use deconstructed rope to lead them."

Rather than changing the content of the message, as the first does, Erickson said this approach maintains that it's necessary "to alter the way in which we present" the gospel message. "So it is not the content, but the style of presenting it that may have to be changed -- more a matter of form, than content."

An example of this approach, Erickson noted, is that "instead of a propositional approach or presentation, it may have to be put in a narrative or story form."

-- Third, "Yes, we can lead deconstructed horses to water, but the horse is not really deconstructed."

This approach to postmodernism rejects the idea that there is essentially any difference in people today which dictates a different method of presenting the gospel.

"The horse thinks that he is (deconstructed), but he really is not," Erickson explained. "Consequently, no adjustment of the water or of the rope needs to be made. We treat horses that think themselves to be postmodern the same way as any other kind of horse."

With this approach "all that needs to be done is to present the truth and it will bear fruit," Erickson noted. "One doesn't need to try to understand the person. Persons have not so fully cut themselves off from the grace of God that they can't be reached with a plain presentation of the truth."

-- Fourth, "Yes, we can lead deconstructed horses but we first have to de-deconstruct the horse."

"It is simply not possible to live on the basis of a deconstructed or radically postmodern kind of approach," Erickson said. "Deconstructed horses can be reached, but they first have to be helped to recognize the futility and the impossibility of the position they hold. ... This is done by pushing horses to be consistently and thoroughly deconstructed. Whereupon they will discover that they cannot live on that basis."

Erickson told the seminarians, although he is still considering the proper approach to postmodernism, "I am currently, tentatively of the opinion a combination of number two and number four may be the most helpful."

Erickson was careful to note, "I'm not talking about going all the way with number two. But we may need to find new means of delivery" while making sure "that it's done only on a provisional basis and that the content is still there."

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"It may be that at least in initiating conversation with the postmodernists we must move to where that person is. ... If the horse is on the other side of the bridge, we don't just stand on our side of the bridge and try to beckon the horse to come across. We'll have to cross the bridge to where the horse is, get ahold of the rope."

Rather than despairing of the situation, evangelicals have "a great time of opportunity ... to influence the way people think," Erickson said. "But it will depend upon us, by the help and the grace of God, wisely, carefully, kindly, sympathetically to deal with those kinds of questions" which postmodernism poses.

During the four-day lecture series at the Kansas City, Mo.,-based seminary, Erickson surveyed and critiqued approaches to postmodernism among evangelical theologians David Wells, Stanley Grenz, Thomas Oden and Francis Schaeffer.

The lectureship honors the memory of Burlan A. Sizemore, a professor of Old Testament interpretation and Hebrew at Midwestern Seminary from 1968 until his death in an automobile accident in 1976. The lectureship was established in 1978 by the Sizemore family and friends, together with the administration, faculty and trustees of the seminary.

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Early retirees cite obedience to God in heading to seminary

By Dena Dyer

Baptist Press
11/13/96

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--Nothing, it seemed, could fill the "dark spot" in Bob Patterson's soul. Not a successful 25-year career with the U.S. Department of Defense. Not a supportive wife, two successful daughters and two beautiful grandchildren. Not more money than he had ever dreamed of earning. Not teaching Sunday school at his local church. Not his hobbies.

He was 52 and empty.

So in December 1995 he left his lucrative job and the life he had known as a Baptist layman and came to Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary with his wife, Nancy.

Finally, the dark, gnawing feeling was fed.

The first time he verbally acknowledged the "hunger" in his life was 1976, Patterson said. He and Nancy were members of a small mission church in Australia. One Sunday afternoon, Patterson told his Sunday school teacher, Baptist missionary Tom Fleming, he felt God had something for him to do.

"Well, Bob, you may be 50 years old before you know what it is," Patterson recalled Fleming saying. The missionary missed by one year.

"I was 51 and getting ready to change jobs," Patterson said. "Nancy and I were on a trip home to Maryland from Kentucky, and we began to discuss the sense of dissatisfaction I was experiencing."

Nancy, who had known for years of his desire to be more involved in Christian ministry, asked him, "If you could do anything in the world, what would you do?" It didn't surprise me at all when he answered that he would do something ministry-related."

That conversation jump-started Patterson's decision to attend seminary.

"Over the next few months, I found myself responding to a conviction that I should begin preparing for full-time service," he said. "So I enrolled in local seminary extension classes, thinking I would pursue an M.Div. and retire in five or six years into full-time work."

The Pattersons plunged themselves into an "Experiencing God" group (a 13-week Bible study about knowing and doing the will of God) at First Baptist Church, Laurel, Md. When they came upon the statement, "What you do next says what you believe about God," the couple decided God was speaking directly to them.

"We made the decision to retire early and come to Southwestern," Patterson said. "And since last October, we have leased our Maryland home, bought a house in Fort Worth, retired, moved, had two new grandchildren and started seminary."

Southwestern was his school of choice because he "never dreamed of going anywhere else. Nancy's grandfather went here, and everyone I knew in ministry went here."

And what he hears in classes affirms what he's been teaching to his own Sunday school classes over the years and "confirms that this is where I need to be."

--more--

Patterson, who calls himself "a product of Bible teaching," has been impressed by Southwestern's faculty.

"I have immensely fair and wonderful professors. There is a sense of camaraderie, dedication and unity among the staff members that is inspiring," he said.

That unity has helped him feel like he belongs in the Southwestern family -- more so than he felt a part of the Washington scene, he said. "I sit in chapel and think about how unusual it is for me to be with so many people who have the same sense of calling and conviction that I do."

Nancy has found her niche as well. She participates in Southwestern Singers, takes a sign language course and attends chapel daily. "She meets me in chapel, and it's the highlight of my day," Bob noted.

To Nancy, seminary is just one more step in a life of obedience to God.

"I was fairly young when I turned my life over to the Lord," she said. "I knew that he would lead and guide me, and he has always equipped me for whatever task he called me to, even when I wasn't sure I was qualified."

In their Washington days, she volunteered in the White House office of children's correspondence.

"Now, instead of going to the White House every week, I come to seminary every day," she quipped.

And just as they have seen God working to bring them to seminary, the Pattersons are confident God will provide direction for their future.

"I'm not worried about what the next step will be," Bob said. "I believe that God will reveal his will to me in due time.

"We're not here for us -- we simply had to come. We are here to learn how to serve the Lord more effectively. We want to get to know him better. And if he isn't magnified through us, it's really all a waste."

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