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April 19, 1996

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CALENDAR

MISSOURI--Midwestern Seminary trustee meeting, April 22-23, Kansas City.

TENNESSEE--Historical Society annual meeting, April 22-24, Nashville.

ALABAMA--WMU-sponsored Children and the Church Conference, April 24-26, Birmingham.

TENNESSEE--Brotherhood Commission trustee meeting, April 26-27 Memphis.

WASHINGTON--North American Baptist Fellowship bi-annual meeting, April 26-28, Washington

Oklahoma City Baptist's book  
grapples with 'Where Was God?' By Art Toalston

Baptist Press  
4/19/96

OKLAHOMA CITY (BP)--"Where Was God at 9:02 A.M.?"

The question involves April 19, 1995 -- one year ago today -- when more than 160 people were killed in the terrorist bombing of Oklahoma City's Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building.

The question also is the title of a book in which Oklahoma City's Robin Jones recounts the ministry of Christians in the community and across the country to the suffering, grief, trauma and rage among victims, relatives and friends and countless others forever affected by the blast.

Jones weathered the Oklahoma City tragedy from her post as general manager of Christian radio stations KQCV, 800, a news-and-information AM, and KNLT, 104.9, contemporary Christian FM. She herself was involved in numerous efforts by the station to nurture spiritual healing. Much of the counsel in the secular media, she said in the days after the bombing, "makes you cringe if you're a Christian."

"What we have to offer," said Jones, a member of Oklahoma City's Metropolitan Baptist Church, "has another whole dimension."

In her book, Jones tells of one man, for example, who stayed with the trapped victims in the building despite the threat of a second bomb. "We may die in the next few minutes," he said to those around him. "Who here knows Jesus Christ as Savior?"

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Jones' book gives plenty of other examples of Christian hope, as its subtitle indicates: "Miraculous Stories of Faith and Love from Oklahoma City."

She writes: "On the morning of the bombing, the mayor's annual prayer breakfast, with 1,200 people attending, had taken place. Moments after the blast, Mayor Ron Norick's office called Dr. Robert Allen at Wesley United Methodist Church. 'We're going to need chaplains. Can you put together a program?'

"Working with both the police department and FBI chaplains at the bomb site, Dr. Allen became part of the team to network churches for ministry to friends and families of all the victims.

"Hundreds of people were made homeless by the blast. Residents of the 400 units of the Regency Towers apartment complex, across the street from the Murrah building, were evacuated with only the clothes on their backs. Feed the Children, an international relief organization located six miles from the devastation (headed by Southern Baptist evangelist Larry Jones), took care of them with the help of churches in the area. The Salvation Army provided 3,000 ministers, employees and volunteers to counsel 1,600 victims and family members. They estimate the long-term needs for people directly affected by the blast will total \$3.5 million. Feed the Children served 10,000 meals to EMS workers and volunteers while City Church provided 1,200 to 1,500 meals a day for two weeks.

"The church network coordinated the services of 600 chaplains for immediate and long-range counsel and support."

Jones writes of "on-the-spot ministry" by such people as Steve Hanchett, pastor of Berry Road Baptist Church, Norman, Okla.

"The following Tuesday night, our team was in front of the building," Hanchett is quoted as recounting. "Rescuers had been working diligently to recover one of the Marines. The 56 members of the rescue team gathered in the street. One of them approached me. 'Chaplain, will you pray for us?'

"He led me over to the tired, dusty crew, then said, 'Wait a minute, will you?' He got his radio and asked them to shut down the cranes. He asked the workers up on the rubble pile to pause. 'Now you can pray.'

"In the midst of heartache and suffering, there was no hesitation in praying together in a public place," Hanchett said.

Writes Jones: "God's squad was prepared. The informal relationships build through the prayer breakfast shifted into an efficient response network to handle the needs of the rescue operation.

"The pastors didn't know it was coming. They didn't even know they were ready. "But they were."

All author proceeds from "Where Was God at 9:02 A.M.?", released last fall by Thomas Nelson Publishers, will go to several Oklahoma City post-bombing funds through The Burbridge Foundation.

A list in the back of the book chronicles each victim by name, age and occupation, encouraging readers to "commit to prayer for the next calendar year the halo of friends and family around that deceased person."

After a national interview Jones did in the Boston area, a member of a quilting group there began creating a memorial quilt based on the book. The quilt arrived in Oklahoma City in late March, received a high degree of interest from local organizers and became part of the April 19th commemorative activities for victims and families.

The book "confronts some basic theological questions which any thinking person will face in times of great tragedy," reviewer Thomas Marberry wrote in the journal Contact. "Where was God? Why did he allow this to happen? These are difficult questions, and there are no easy answers to them. Those who ask such questions should not be regarded as lacking in faith.

"The fact is God was there," Marberry continued. "He was there when the rescue workers pulled the bodies of 18 small children out of the wreckage. He was there with those who suffered in the hospitals. He was there when families were informed of the deaths of their loved ones."

Marberry quoted Jones' words at the end of the book: "Where was God at 9:02 a.m.? Many Oklahomans answer that questions by saying, 'He walked among us.'"

Another reviewer, Michelle Lumley, writing in the Dublin, Ga., Courier Herald, voiced a similar assessment: "In 'Where was God at 9:02 a.m.?', Robin Jones, along with the help of Sandy Dengler, braves the uncertain directions answers may take to examine this question -- so many deaths, so much pain, 'Where was God?'"

"Using testimonies from people who survived the bombing, along with that of family members and rescue workers involved in the recovery mission, Jones examines the aspect of his presence in spite of the tragedy and his interventions during. Miracles come in various forms; whether they are recognized as such is entirely up to the individual involved."

Among the accounts in Jones' book is one involving Christian author and artist Joni Eareckson Tada's visit to the scene.

"I could hardly stand to look up into the ragged guts of the building," Tada is quoted as saying. "I glanced away and noticed a man and woman approaching with a glass vase of beautiful yellow roses. They were relatives of a woman named Oleta whose body was trapped somewhere on the second floor. Oleta's husband, Hank, had sent them. It was too difficult for him to deliver the roses personally.

"The couple handed the vase to a chaplain who was standing near me and asked, 'Could someone please take these flowers and place them on the second floor?'"

"The chaplain and the roses disappeared and within minutes, I spotted through the chain-link fence the crystal vase being carried toward the building between the chaplain and a tall fireman. They disappeared behind a pile of concrete and an earthmover.

"Amid all the brown dirt, gray concrete, orange equipment, red flags and blue coats of FBI workers sifting through the rubble," Tada continued, "that bouquet of yellow roses shone with beautiful iridescence. A tiny vase of flowers that symbolized hope and love and family unity. That image of yellow roses will remain in my memory for years to come -- an unfading picture that all the world's hate, malice and wickedness can never, ever discolor."

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Brotherhood enrollment up;  
Williams points to momentum

By Steve Barber

Baptist Press  
4/19/96

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (BP)--The 15.9 percent increase in Brotherhood enrollment and participation in Southern Baptist churches from a year ago, to a total of more than 749,000, shows momentum in missions education and involvement, according to Brotherhood Commission President James D. Williams.

That momentum, Williams said, "cannot be allowed to stall" in the midst of the restructuring now under way of the Southern Baptist Convention.

"We are excited by these figures because they show legitimate, meaningful growth. They are a strong indicator that our work is headed in the right direction," Williams said. "And, it's imperative that we not allow this momentum to be lost" as the Brotherhood Commission becomes a part of the new North American Mission Board.

Brotherhood will be merged with the Home Mission Board and Radio and Television Commission to create the new North American board, as part of the SBC "Covenant for a New Century" restructuring approved by messengers to the SBC sesquicentennial meeting last year in Atlanta.

"As the Brotherhood Commission becomes part of the new organization," Williams said, "there must continue to be opportunities for enhancing missions education and empowering missions involvement through the local church. This is no time for cost-cutting and 'downsizing' of effort."

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As the Implementation Task Force appointed by the SBC Executive Committee works to trim costs as part of its assignment to work out details of the reorganization, Williams said he urges "we not lose sight of the fact that direct involvement of our people in mission action is one of the best ways of enlarging Southern Baptists' financial base" through the Cooperative Program and the home and foreign missions offerings.

"The more people we have getting involved in missions, the more people we will have giving to missions. Involvement is a catalyst for increased giving at the local church level," he said. "Any number of studies over the years have shown this to be true."

The percentage increase for Brotherhood over the 1993-94 total, until then an all-time high, far exceeded that of other church programs listed in the survey. The results were part of a compilation from the 1995 Annual Church Profile released by the Baptist Sunday School Board.

For the record, the new figures show Brotherhood enrollment and participation for 1994-95 at 749,310, an increase over the 1993-94 total of 646,028.

Williams also took issue with an implication that any year-to-year comparison of the two totals could be misleading.

"The research methods used did indeed change somewhat from the previous year," Williams said, "but the result is that this year's numbers actually reflect the best estimate of Brotherhood enrollment and involvement that we've had in many years. In fact, it's the most accurate, complete picture we've ever had. Brotherhood may have been underreported in years gone by."

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HMB's Lewis cites  
10 reasons for praise

By David Winfrey

Baptist Press  
4/19/96

ALPHARETTA, Ga. (BP)--Last year's increase in baptisms and church starts are two of many reasons Southern Baptists should praise God, said Home Mission Board President Larry L. Lewis.

In his annual year in review address to Home Mission Board directors, Lewis called the past 12 months "a year of tremendous victories and how we thank God for that."

Southern Baptists reported 393,811 baptisms in 1995, 4 percent more than the previous year. Lewis also noted it is the second straight year baptisms grew.

Meanwhile, the denomination added 1,458 new congregations last year, the second-highest number of new Southern Baptist congregations since the 1950s, he noted.

"While all of the mainline denominations have been going backwards in membership and in number of churches over these past several years, Southern Baptists have had continuing increase, not only in churches but in members as well."

Southern Baptists now have 40,120 constituted churches and 5,716 church-type missions for a total of 45,836 congregations.

Eight other accomplishments Lewis said warrant praise were:

-- more professions of faith from ministry missionaries' work. Ministry section missionaries recorded 48,768 professions of faith. That is a 9 percent increase from 1994 and an average of 12 per missionary. "The average Southern Baptist church only averages about 8 baptisms per year," Lewis said.

-- a record \$38.9 million given to the 1995 Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for home missions.

-- laborers for the harvest. The board's missionary personnel department communicated last year with 1,000 perspective missionaries, Lewis said. The board ended 1995 with 4,857 home missions personnel.

-- new church planting system. The board's extension section launched a church planting pilot project in eight states to mentor new church pastors and encourage them to start other congregations.

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-- Home Mission Board's move to Alpharetta. "Through the sale of our Spring Street property plus the capital funds provided by the SBC and over \$2 million in gifts from individuals, we've been able to move into this new building debt-free."

-- "Start Something New." More than 700 Southern Baptist leaders attended a meeting in February to kick off Start Something New, the denomination's emphasis for church growth through new units, including new worship services, churches, ministries and Sunday school classes.

-- Celebrate Jesus 2000. Southern Baptists are working with other evangelical Christians for a witnessing thrust for the rest of the millennium.

-- Crossover Atlanta and New Orleans. Southern Baptists recorded 1,408 professions of faith during the annual evangelism emphasis preceding the Southern Baptist Convention last year. Preparations are being made for this year's event in New Orleans, he added.

"It thrills my heart that when Southern Baptists come to town for a convention we leave more than just our money," Lewis said. "We leave more than a thousand people every year who know Jesus Christ who would not have known him if we had not marshaled that effort."

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#### SPECIAL PHOTOESSAY

Chernobyl: 10 years after  
world's worst nuclear accident

By Bill Bangham

Baptist Press  
4/19/96

CHERNOBYL, Ukraine (BP)--It has been 10 years since a sleepy, inexperienced nuclear power plant operator in the Ukraine moved the control rods at Chernobyl Reactor Number Four slightly out of position. His mistake caused the worst nuclear accident in history.

The resulting explosion early the morning of April 26, 1986, sent a plume of radioactive debris high into the atmosphere. For the next 10 days, the reactor burned. The fire vented 100 times more radiation than the atomic bomb that leveled Hiroshima.

It is an event long off the front page. World attention has shifted to other issues, other agonies. Yet for people of the former Soviet Union who still live in the shadow of this event, it is an issue and an agony that remains, one that can be seen in the faces of their children.

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(BP) photos (four horizontals and one vertical) mailed 4/18/96 to state Baptist newspapers by the Richmond bureau of Baptist Press. Cutlines available in the SBCNet News Room.

Baptist criticizes 'charismatics'  
for false hope to Chernobyl victims

Baptist Press  
4/19/96

KIEV, Ukraine (BP)--The victims of Chernobyl exemplify the problem Baptists face with the "charismatic movement" in the former Soviet Union, a European Baptist leader said during the Congress of the Euro-Asiatic Federation of Unions of the Commonwealth of Independent States.

A report of an address by Karl Heinz Walter, general secretary of the European Baptist Federation (EBF), titled, "The Charismatic Movement and the Baptist Churches in Europe," appeared in the April 12 edition of European Baptist Press Service (EBPS).

Two leaders of U.S. ministries with charismatic ties issued responses challenging Walter's generalizations about the charismatic movement. Both ministries have ongoing work in the Chernobyl area -- site of the world's worst nuclear accident in April 1986.

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The Euro-Asiatic Federation of Unions of the CIS (EAF), which Walter addressed during its Feb. 21-23 meeting in Kiev, the Ukrainian capital, encompasses about 315,000 "Evangelical Christians-Baptists" in most of the countries of the former Soviet Union.

Walter said the problem with the "charismatic movement" in the former Soviet Union is, according to the EBPS report, "perhaps best understood through the extreme, although pertinent, example of the victims of Chernobyl. Walter noted 'false healing prophets' have created a particularly difficult problem in Belarus. About 1.4 million children have radiation sickness from Chernobyl, and of these at least 300,000 have cancer.

"In cities where hundreds of thousands of children and others are still suffering because of radiation poisoning caused by the power plant disaster of Chernobyl, certain charismatic 'obscure healing prophets' have created much 'spiritual confusion' in the minds of the people," the EBPS report continued. "Again and again these 'charismatics' have led diseased persons to believe they would be healed through prayer. Well-attended healing services have been organized, and large crowds have been drawn to attend, everyone full of expectation. Most have had little or no religious background of any kind.

"The truth, commented Klaus Rossler in 'Die Gemeinde,' the German Baptist journal, is 'until now there is no case of real healing,'" EBPS reported.

"The negative results from such false promises have created serious problems of credibility for Baptists and other evangelicals in large areas of the former Soviet Union. Many pastors and church leaders have therefore reacted against other manifestations of the charismatic movement as well, even to such 'acceptable' spiritual gifts as the enthusiastic singing of hymns during Lord's Day services."

Tim Dahlin, executive director of the John Guest Evangelistic Team, issued a statement responding to Walter's address, noting, "The charismatic movement is one of the strongest forces behind evangelism worldwide. People from all denominations and walks of life share the joy and excitement of participating in God's gifts to his people. To criticize the whole of the 'charismatic movement' because of a few 'false healing prophets' would be singularly unfair.

"That a few have unfortunately grandstanded their programs at the expense of thousands of tragic Chernobyl victims is not ethical," Dahlin said, "yet their actions should not be considered representative of the heart and soul of the movement as a whole."

Guest traveled to Chernobyl in 1991 as the first outside evangelist to preach within the 30 km Zone, Dahlin said. Guest "preached the biblical message of hope through faith in Jesus Christ, but also brought greatly needed supplies of medicine and pharmaceuticals," Dahlin said. "Each year since then, one of the partners of the John Guest team has returned to preach in the zone to cleanup personnel still working there and bring supplies to the infirmary to treat ongoing cases of radiation sickness."

George R. Jones, executive director of Christian Fellowship Ministries International, Inc., based in Lynchburg, Va., said, "I have personally been to the Chernobyl zone 14 times and have brought almost \$200,000 worth of medical supplies and pharmaceuticals to the 17,000 people who still work in the highly contaminated 'Dead Zone.' Most of this help has come from 'charismatics' . . . . Other charismatic groups like Pat Robertson and CBN have effective CIS ministries that have brought tens of thousands to Christ.

"Walter seems notably silent on the issue of CIS Baptist and evangelical leaders who have enriched themselves through associations with western aid while their congregations stay poor," Jones continued. "I've been astounded by the number of foreign-financed building projects that our ministry has encountered since 1991. I've also observed pastors manipulating and controlling their congregations with 'power brokering' tactics just like the communist party once used. Such abuses of leadership will certainly undermine credibility.

"It is my opinion," Jones said, "that the problems faced by many Baptists and evangelicals in CIS countries is not because of 'charismatic' excesses, but a lack of Christian humility and repentance. Some Christian leaders who once walked in humility and fear because of persecution now openly boast of their sufferings with a pride and arrogance that is shameful. Two Baptist pastors in Rostov na Danu, Russia, actually told me that free-world Christians were 'obligated to give them financial assistance' because of their persecuted past."

EBPS, in its report, additionally recounted, "The report of the vice president of the Belarus Baptist Union, Viktor Krutko, for example, argued in favor of taking a hard line against the charismatics. It was evident that Krutko's report received much support from the listeners. Walter noted with a degree of sadness that congress delegates had little time to discuss either report. It is difficult, therefore, to determine how the two studies were accepted by participants."

Asked by EBPS for his opinion, Yuri Apatov, editor of the Russian Baptist journal, Christian Life, said Walter's report was "very serious and biblical."

"The brothers (pastors, etc.) approved it," Apatov said. "The practice of our churches has many (examples) of extreme 'charismatic' manifestations. (These manifestations) do not (bring) revival to the churches, but divisions ... ."

Alexander Kozynko, director of the Russian Baptist Theological Seminary in Moscow, was quoted as saying: "(In order to evaluate) the charismatic crisis between East and West, we have to take in account the situation in the past time and the ways of baptism (sic) development (i.e., the development of the Baptist churches) in 20th century in East and West."

Kozynko described problems created by what he called "very radical Pentecostal and similar churches mostly from the West" as very great, EBPS reported.

Participants in the meeting included pastors and leaders from all EAF unions. Also present were representatives of several Unions -- Czech Republic, Estonia, Germany, Hungary, Latvia and Lithuania. Denton Lotz, general secretary of the Baptist World Alliance, also was in attendance.

Most of Walter's address, according to EBPS, "was essentially a Bible study on the ministry of the Holy Spirit and the meaning of the so-called 'charismata,' the spiritual 'gifts' which God grants to Christian believers. Walter began his study with an examination of the biblical passages, mainly in John's gospel and in Acts, in which the charismata are described. He noted the Holy Spirit gives rebirth, operates where it will, is with us for eternity, leads us in all truth and testifies of Jesus. Walter reminded the pastors and leaders that, in addition to these five major actions or ministries of the Holy Spirit, the New Testament describes 10 others."

EBPS quoted Walter as saying: "We should give thanks to God for his Word, the Bible, that it gives us clear direction and guidelines in all questions about the Holy Spirit and about the charismatic movements."

Further, Walter said, "If you understand these gifts not as something extraordinary, then you will find that they can be identified in all churches. It is the way the Holy Spirit reveals his power and the new life (which is) in Christ. Sometimes (the gifts) are hidden or even hindered, and they need to be rediscovered and revitalized. But they are present. Otherwise, the church could not be the church of the living Christ."

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Edited by Art Toalston.

Spring break evangelism  
reaps hundreds of souls

By Bryan McAnally

Baptist Press  
4/19/96

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--Ten-year-old Megan has four siblings, none of whom share the same father. If her Modesto, Ill., home were in Fort Worth, Texas, it likely would be condemned. Dirt, swept into piles, filled each room.

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For Jason Graffagnino, a master of divinity student from Louisiana, his experience with young Megan defined his week's experience as a part of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary's 1996 Spring Evangelism Practicum, held March 17-24.

Megan accepted Christ after hearing Graffagnino preach at Modesto Baptist Church. He later went to the girl's home, hoping to engage in individual ministry. But upon seeing her family situation and living conditions, he became enraged. "When I saw her mother, I became angrier and angrier," he said.

"Then the Holy Spirit slapped me across the face. It was literally like a slap when I looked at Megan," he said. "God showed me that he now lived in Megan and so he now lived in that home. God had made a new creation in Megan, and that entire family would have to learn from it."

Megan and Graffagnino weren't the only people whose lives were affected during the week. More than 130 people in 25 states and Canada made first-time professions of faith as a result of the annual evangelism practicum. More than 510 total decisions were recorded during the week, in which 82 students preached 551 sermons and made 890 personal witnessing visits, according to Dan Crawford, director of evangelism practica and professor of evangelism and spiritual formation.

Gary Houdek, a master of arts in religious education student from Minnesota, experienced just how creative God can be during his time at Austin (Minn.) Baptist Church.

"I was preaching in a church that had 20 people, and by Thursday attendance was down to 10. I was very discouraged," he said. "They must have figured out that they did not have Charles Spurgeon in their presence."

But on Wednesday, the local newspaper interviewed Houdek.

"We got the front page, the main headline, a color photo and they ran my testimony and the gospel," he said. "Over the last couple of services, we had more than 40 in attendance. More important, though, is that this is a paper that 75 percent of the 20,000 citizens receive. This paper will be here long after I'm gone, and these people will get to see the gospel."

Houdek said his experience taught him much about the work of ministry.

"I thought I could bring ministry, but I couldn't -- God does. I also learned what a resourceful God we have."

Steve Lee, a theology student from Canada, spent the week ministering in Sycamore (Ill.) Baptist Church. He and his wife, Mi, befriended Dorothy and Connie, two mentally retarded ladies who appeared to have only each others for friends.

"At the end of the week, they came up together at the call for decisions," Lee said. "We tightly held hands together and prayed for the longest time. When we let go, I saw they had given me 50 cents in one hand and \$1.50 in the other, all in coins. They told me to buy some hot coffee for our trip home so we would stay awake."

He later saw the ladies asking the church for cold coffee and spoiled cream to take home.

"Our hearts broke," he said. "They reminded me of the lady giving her copper pieces -- theirs was an example of true biblical giving."

Eric Spano, a master of divinity student from Florida, worked with Simpson (Ill.) Baptist Church. He had the opportunity to lead the first man he visited to Christ.

"Charlie Morris was the one guy in town everyone knew would never get saved," Spano said. "He was so mean the Army had to find a way to get rid of him. I asked God, 'What am I doing here? This guy could flick me and I'd die.'"

But through the grace of God, Spano noted, Morris prayed to receive Christ. "He walked to the front of the church and said, 'I don't know what to say, I just love Jesus Christ.'"

Crawford said Spano's experience was typical of an unexpected trend in this year's practicum.



"We had an unusually high number of senior adult men saved. I don't ever remember that before," he said. "There must have been seven or eight or nine different guys who got up and gave testimonies about senior adult men being saved, either as a personal witnessing and/or public decision. It's quite a unique feature of this spring break, and I don't know what to attribute it to, except God."

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Sunday School Board addresses  
remedies for sexual addiction

By Terri Lackey

Baptist Press  
4/19/96

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Jeff Seat sees a lot of Christians in his counseling office. Sure, they have the normal problems -- kids and spouses driving 'em crazy, boredom at work, half-lived life seeming to go nowhere.

Then, there's the sexual addiction.

"Seventy-five to 80 percent of the people I see are Christians," said Seat, a Smyrna, Tenn., therapist certified as an addiction specialist who, as a recovering sexual addict, specializes in treating others with the condition.

Sexual addiction is simply any compulsive behavior regarding sex, according to a new Southern Baptist Sunday School Board support group resource, "Faithful and True: Sexual Integrity in a Fallen World."

It can be an urgent desire for pornography, daily masturbation, frequent encounters with prostitutes or repeated short-term extramarital affairs.

About six years ago for his master's thesis, Seat, a Southern Baptist who attended Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, surveyed 15,000 Southern Baptist senior pastors in six southern states, receiving a response rate of 22.3 percent.

"Ten to 11 percent admitted to being involved in sexual misconduct with members of their church. Another study I've read found almost double that rate of sexual misconduct among pastors."

And while sexual misconduct and sexual addiction are two different issues, they can overlap, he said.

Seat said the Bible Belt includes a large community of recovering sexual addicts.

Christians have what Seat calls the "control-release-shame dynamic." That is, he said, people attempting to control their lives, yet losing the battle with that control and releasing it through inappropriate behaviors. Those sinful behaviors then cause guilt and shame.

"Basically, the more people try to control their lives and clamp down on the bad and sinful parts, the more that life energy will come out sideways or as an addiction," he said.

Any person who lives a very structured and controlled lifestyle leans toward sexual, work or eating addictions, he said.

Seat said the number of sexual addiction cases he sees is steadily rising. And women, who at one time were seen as nearly impervious to the condition, make up 40 percent of that practice.

"Sexual addiction is probably as common as sexual abuse among Christians, and there is a definite link between victim and victimizers in the Christian community," Seat said.

In other words, those who were victims of abuse or trauma in their childhoods are more likely to become addicts or people with compulsive personalities, he said.

Seat said trauma in childhood can run the gamut from sexual and physical abuse to sheer emotional neglect. He defines trauma in five categories on two continuums: physical, sexual, emotional, mental and spiritual, being either overt and intrusive or covert and negligent.

Seat said most of his patients are people who use sex to medicate their pain.

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"They eventually get to a place where they realize they want to stop, and they can't."

Without help, that is.

"Sexual addiction is very much a curable condition, like diabetes or nearsightedness."

Mark Laaser, author of the BSSB's new resource dealing with sexual addiction and sexual misconduct, said sex addiction, when not dealt with, only escalates.

"Sexual addiction is progressive; it gets worse over time," said Laaser. "In the workbook, 'Faithful and True,' I outline how it is repetitive, degenerative, unmanageable, medicative and destructive."

The workbook is based on "The Secret Sin: Healing the Wounds of Sexual Addiction," a book written by Laaser.

A former pastor who lost his job because of sexual addiction, Laaser now travels the continent from his Chanhassen, Minn., home conducting workshops about the condition. His subspecialty is counseling pastors who have sexual problems and working with churches "where pastors have committed sexual indiscretions."

"One of the reasons some go into the pastorate is not just to answer a true call, but to heal deeper wounds in their lives," Laaser said. "And some of those wounds can be sexual. People who are wounded go into ministry professions."

"When the strains of pastoral ministry take their toll, the deeper wounds in their lives prevent them from making healthy choices."

Dale McCleskey, editor the LIFE Support Group workbook, said the Sunday School Board felt "obligated to produce the resource dealing biblically with sexual sin in the context both of compassion and responsibility."

"Sexual sin is a major problem in the church," McCleskey said. "Many Christians are defeated by out-of-control sexual behaviors that they neither understand or know how to deal with."

The workbook comes in two parts: The first teaches practical skills for coping with a sexually obsessed culture and the second deals with sexual addiction and methods for overcoming patterns of sexual sin.

"Sexuality is a wonderful gift of God that is horribly distorted by sin in our world," McCleskey said. "The church needs to teach people how to develop healthy, Christ-honoring attitudes and behaviors related to sexuality."

To be released in June, "Faithful and True" may be purchased from Baptist Book Stores or by calling 1-800-458-2772.

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(BP) photo posted in SBCNet News Room.

Recovering from sex addiction,  
they help others find a cure

By Terri Lackey

Baptist Press  
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NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Mark Laaser and Jeff Seat seem to live parallel lives. Both are highly religious men serving in helping professions. Both have obtained the highest level of schooling, a Ph.D. Both aspired to serve God in the ministry.

And both are recovering sexual addicts.

Seat, a therapist from Smyrna, Tenn., and Mark Laaser, a former pastor from Chanhassen, Minn., met about nine years ago in a California counseling center for sexual addicts.

Like most adolescent boys, Seat and Laaser began their teenage years with a fervid, but seemingly harmless interest in sex. Unlike most boys, however, their curiosity shifted into compulsion, and both began using pornography and masturbating frequently. As adults they moved to engaging in prostitution and adulterous affairs.

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"Unlike most adolescent boys, I did not move to making healthier choices," said Laaser, author of a new Southern Baptist Sunday School Board support group resource, "Faithful and True: Sexual Integrity in a Fallen World." "I got stuck in the adolescent phase of development."

Sexual addiction is simply any compulsive behavior regarding sex, said Laaser, who based the support group resource on his book, "The Secret Sin: Healing the Wounds of Sexual Addiction."

Laaser, like many who experience sexual addiction, assumed his compulsive sexual activity would stop when he married.

"I married my high school sweetheart and was surprised to find out that even given regular sexual activity, my addiction did not go away," he said. "I started having affairs, not long-term, but short-term affairs with women I taught or had counseling relationships with.

"That caused a friend to intervene, and on March 27, 1987, I began my recovery."

Laaser's wife, Debbie, joined him in counseling, and they eventually restored their relationship.

Seat was not so lucky. "In general, by the time I was a late teen," he recounted, "I knew that my sexuality had become compulsive. And even through the early years of my marriage, I was aware my sexual behavior was out of control."

Seat said he sought help from five different Christian counselors, none of whom knew how to help a person with sexual addictions. That is one of the reasons he chose his present profession. Eighty percent of those he counsels are Christians, many of those with sexual addictions.

"Through my healing, God has brought a deeper emotional and spiritual life to me than I have ever known before," Seat said.

Laaser said a deeper spiritual life also has resulted from his recovery process.

"The word 'restoration' is not really appropriate to explain how my wife and I stayed together," Laaser said. "We actually built something totally new, and we have a better spiritual and emotional intimacy than we had ever known before."

Seat emphasizes counseling for spouses of sexual addicts is imperative. It took divorce for him to realize spouses suffer from an unhealthy codependency, identical to that experienced in alcoholic relationships.

"A real important element is co-sexual addiction. It is as difficult as sexual addiction," Seat said. "The traumas of a co-addict are almost identical to those of the addict."

Produced by the BSSB's discipleship and family development division, the LIFE Support Group series workbook, "Faithful and True: Sexual Integrity in a Fallen World," comes in two parts, according to Laaser.

"The first part of the book is for everybody. It helps people know how to lead a more sexually complete, balanced life -- emotionally and spiritually."

Part one also teaches practical skills for dealing with a sexually obsessed culture as sexual abuse and sexual sin gains more public attention.

The second part of the book deals with sexual addiction and methods for overcoming patterns of sexual sin, he said.

"Anyone who cares about or works with people will benefit from studying the second part of the book," Laaser said. "People all around us are struggling with shame and guilt over out-of-control sexual behaviors. Even if you don't think you are a sexual addict, but you have participated in some sexual sins, you could work through the second part of the book. Part two contains a lot of good information about the misuse of sexuality."

To be released in June 1996, "Faithful and True" may be purchased from Baptist Book Stores or by calling 1-800-458-2772.

EDITORS' NOTE: The following story replaces one titled "CLC's Ben Mitchell to join Southern Seminary faculty," dated 4/16/96.

### Land, Mitchell to teach ethics at Southern Seminary

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission will be strongly represented in Christian ethics classes at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Richard D. Land, CLC president, has been named distinguished visiting professor of Christian ethics at the Louisville, Ky., seminary for the 1996-97 academic year.

The announcement April 18 comes two days after seminary President R. Albert Mohler Jr., had named C. Ben Mitchell, a consultant on biomedical and life issues for the CLC, as visiting professor of Christian ethics.

Land will commute to Louisville one day a week during the fall and spring semesters. Mitchell will teach a full course load and maintain an ongoing role as the CLC's consultant on biomedical and life issues.

Mitchell will be named assistant professor of Christian ethics upon completion of his doctoral studies, according to seminary President R. Albert Mohler Jr.

Land has led Southern Baptists' moral concerns agency since 1988. Previously, he served as a vice president and professor at Criswell College. He holds the A.B. degree from Princeton University, a Th.M. from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary and a Ph.D. degree from Oxford University.

Mitchell has been a member of the CLC staff since 1992 and previously was a trustee of the agency. He earned the B.S. degree from Mississippi State University at Starkville and the M.Div. degree from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas. He anticipates receiving the Ph.D. degree in medical ethics from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, in May 1997.

Mohler called Land "the towering figure in Christian ethics among Southern Baptists." Land is noted for his courage and biblical conviction, Mohler said. "He has given superb leadership to the Christian Life Commission, and I deeply appreciate his willingness to share with our students as an extension of his leadership ministry."

Mitchell has "emerged as one of the most respected voices in Christian ethics among evangelicals and Southern Baptists," said Mohler. "He is a man of clear conviction and he is committed to considering the urgent ethical issues of our day from a consistent Christian world view. We are fortunate to have an authority who is already on the firing line to bring that expertise to our students."

The new relationship between the CLC staffers and Southern Seminary will start near the 50th anniversary of the CLC, which began on Southern's campus in 1947. The seminary will host the CLC's annual seminar next spring.

"By God's providence, a half century later Southern Seminary and the Christian Life Commission now enter into an unprecedented partnership, which I believe will serve as a model for Southern Baptists," Mohler said.

Land, in commenting on Mitchell's move to the classroom, said, "Ben Mitchell has been an invaluable asset to the Christian Life Commission, both in his days as a trustee and then as a staff person. He brings strong Christian convictions and tremendous and incisive expertise to the cutting edge fields of medical ethics, biotechnology and genetic engineering. Ben has felt the call to the seminary classroom with increasing intensity. We are more delighted than we can say that he has been able to answer that call in a way that will allow him to continue his service with the Christian Life Commission into the future."

Citing the CLC's 50th anniversary seminar at Southern Seminary next spring, Land said, "Ben Mitchell's service with both of our institutions is one more among a growing number of events which signal an increasingly close and cooperative relationship between the CLC and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, which we believe will benefit both institutions and enable them to better serve Southern Baptists and the kingdom of God."

Church, radio station  
slate Dove Awards party

By C.C. Risenhoover

WEST MONROE, La. (BP)--The singles ministry of First Baptist Church in West Monroe, La., and local Christian radio station KHLL (K-101 FM) are throwing a party for local singles -- featuring the nationally televised live broadcast of the Dove Awards on FamilyNet and ACTS April 25.

FamilyNet and ACTS, the broadcast and cable television services of the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission, will telecast the awards show from 8-10 p.m. Central.

The Dove Awards TV program, honoring the best in Christian music, is sponsored by the Gospel Music Association and will originate from the Grand Ole Opry House in Nashville, Tenn. Michael W. Smith, a seven-time Dove Award winner, will be the host.

Large-screen television sets will be utilized so all who attend the West Monroe party will have a good view of the awards ceremony.

"Simply put, we're working in conjunction with the singles ministry of First Baptist Church to stage this party," said Rick Godley, general manager of K-101. "The party is at 'First Place,' the old West Monroe Country Club that is now owned by First Baptist Church. There will be plenty of soft drinks and food on hand. And, I'm sure we'll have some albums of Dove Award nominees as door prizes."

The party will begin at 7 p.m. to take advantage of other FamilyNet and ACTS programming. The two program services have scheduled a pre-show special featuring backstage interviews and music video clips from many of the artists nominated for Dove Awards. It will air from 7-8 p.m.

"We have an agreement with Gordon Television Group to produce the pre-show as well as a half-hour post-show highlighting the winners," said Deborah Key, vice president of network operations at the RTVC and general manager of FamilyNet and ACTS. "Both the pre-show and the post-show will be exclusive to FamilyNet and the Faith and Values (F&V) Channel via ACTS."

"What First Baptist Church of West Monroe and radio station K-101 FM are doing in bringing people together to view the Dove Awards is a good example of how such a program can enhance a local ministry through Christian music. Hopefully, other churches, radio stations and television stations will also work together in creative ways to bring people together to share in this experience."

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