



News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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Drama Aids Preaching
Of New Jersey Pastor

by James Evans McReynolds

WALDWICK, N.J. (BP)--A Southern Baptist pastor here has added new life to his preaching through the use of drama, reflecting one side of a trend toward creative forms of preaching.

While some ministers have turned to dialogue sermons, letter sermons, visual aid sermons, discussion sermons, and even silent sermons during a decade when the electronic media have challenged ministers to creative communication, Quinn Pugh, pastor of Bergen Baptist Church here has emphasized drama to enliven interest in worship.

"The Bible is full of the drama of human life," Pugh said. "The characters of Bible times sensed the same kind of pain and sorrow, joy and pleasures as people living today.

"Their temptations, accomplishments, idolatries, and life situations mirror our own," Pugh added.

The New Jersey pastor does not consider himself to be an actor. He began using drama in preaching while he was a college student. Pugh writes his sermon monologues after a careful reading of the Bible in several translations. He tries to visualize the Bible character in his original setting.

Research by Pugh and his wife on the historical and archeological settings of Bible lands including clothing worn in the various periods of Bible history has been helpful as he prepares for his sermon.

"Although I hope the congregation enjoys these dramatic monologue sermons, my purpose is not to entertain, but to proclaim the gospel in an act of worship," Pugh said.

Sometimes Pugh creates dramatic sermon monologues with little known biblical characters such as Silas, Matthias, Pilate or the centurion at the cross.

Skillful use of his imagination enables Pugh to place the character within the scope of the Bible's overall message and within the context of the particular passages of Scripture that contain information about the person being portrayed.

After preaching one of his drama sermons, Pugh breaks character and makes a specific application of the biblical message brought by the man portrayed, and then adds an appeal to the congregation to respond to that message.

Pugh's use of drama has included characterizations of historical and literary personalities as well as biblical characters. In the spring of 1969, he portrayed William B. Johnson, first president of the Southern Baptist Convention, before the annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Historical Commission.

He is now preparing a series of monologue sermons on Jonah for the Nationwide Bible Conference to be held March 15-18 in Dallas.

Through drama, Pugh has introduced the characters of the Bible to many who are unfamiliar with the Scriptures. His dramatic preaching has helped many become acquainted with the most significant character in all of history, Jesus Christ.

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NOTE TO BAPTIST STATE PAPER EDITORS: Photos were mailed 2/12/71.

Literature Evaluation Effort
Begun By Sunday School Board

NASHVILLE (BP)--Users of Southern Baptist Sunday School Board literature this spring will have a chance to evaluate the materials and express opinions on it, as the board begins one of the largest research projects ever undertaken by a religious denomination.

"Operation Talk Back" is an effort by the board to encourage expressions of opinion from every literature user from youth-age on through adult.

"This has the potential--if they (the users) respond to it--of being one of the largest research projects ever undertaken by a religious denomination," said W. L. Howse, director of the board's Education Division.

Major changes were made in age grading and other educational approaches beginning last October. As a result, new publications were created as well as substantial changes made in already existing pieces of literature.

The major changes were made in an effort to provide what churches need and want. "Operation Talk Back" will help evaluate the changes.

The research project is aimed at finding out what literature users think about such things as content, approach of the materials, doctrinal soundness, readability, size, usefulness and many other things which might help improve literature for the next several years.

"We think we know what the churches want and need," said Howse, "but we can't be sure unless they tell us."

To provide for the initial input of information and opinions, all of the literature for the April-May-June quarter will contain questionnaires which should be completed and mailed back to the board.

When the questionnaires are received at the board, they will be compiled and evaluated by the board's research and statistics department.

"The results will be used in the literature development process," said the division head.

"Responding with the questionnaires is each user's opportunity to voice his criticism--whether good or bad. And comments on any topic related to literature will be considered," he added.

Howse said planners of the research project know it will be difficult and, occasionally, time consuming to fill out the questionnaires--especially for those persons who receive many publications.

He stressed, however, that it is important that the questionnaires be completed and returned in order to get a true evaluation of what churches want and need.

The project, which will continue through January 1973, later will include studies and interviews in individual local church situations.



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