

**--- FEATURES**

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Layman Finds Ministry
 In Small Group Relations

By Jim Newton

WASHINGTON (BP)--The George Washington University student looked deep into the teacher's eyes and told him their conversation a few weeks earlier was the most important of his life.

Bill Bangham, 31, the teacher and director of the biology laboratories at the university, nodded, but the Baptist layman could not remember what he had said to the Roman Catholic student.

Whatever was said, that conversation resulted in the spontaneous formation of a small group of George Washington students who are groping for an understanding of their faith. Each member of the group has been touched by Bangham's life. As an "academic assistant" at the university, Bangham is in constant touch with struggling students. Friends say he has a unique ability to communicate one-to-one with people.

"It isn't so much what he says, as the obvious fact that he cares deeply," said one friend. In addition to establishing meaningful relationships with lab students, Bangham visits the student center each morning. He met the Catholic student who said their conversation was the most important of his life, over a cup of coffee.

The formation of the small group of students was a natural development because Bangham is deeply involved in the small group process. The author of "Journey into Small Groups," part of a lay renewal series by the Southern Baptist Convention's (SBC) Brotherhood Commission and the Home Mission Board, SBC, he is one of about 100 "renewal associates" across the denomination who have committed themselves as laymen to lay renewal involvement.

It hasn't always been that way for Bangham, however. Six years ago, he returned to Annapolis, where he was reared, after studying at a small Iowa college. He had hoped to work with a firm studying the ecological effect of a nuclear lab on the Chesapeake Bay. A federal grant to finance the study was cut by Congress, Bangham said, and a promised job failed to come through.

"I just went from one job to another, really groping to find myself at all levels," he said. "I was trying to find out who I was as a person."

One of his many jobs was proofreading at a typesetting company. One night as he worked on a typesetting job, he went to his boss, told him that the copy obviously had never been edited and asked if he could edit it. The customer was pleased and the typesetting company made Bangham their editor, a job he held for almost 18 months before landing the university position.

While he was with the typesetting firm, the Bangham's first daughter, Sherianne was born. A year later, their second daughter Shannon came along. "Dianne had extracted a promise from me that when our first child was born, we would become active in church," Bangham recalled.

"But I had long ago rejected the church as having no real value in my life," he confessed. "The thing that clinched it was when I went to college and quit going to church, and nobody noticed or cared."

In Annapolis, however, Bill and Dianne Bangham found a church that, to them, was different--Heritage Baptist Church. David Haney, now director of lay renewal for the SBC Brotherhood Commission, was pastor. "I didn't buy all he said," Bangham recalled, "but I liked the way he said it."

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"The people at Heritage just included us and accepted me where I was and loved me in spite of myself. I began to see there was something very real in what they were trying to live out. Every Sunday Haney preached the 'living out of a living God,' and I came to the point that I just couldn't deny it any longer," Bangham noted. But the layman was miserable. "I felt I was a failure . . ." The turning point came, Bangham said, during a weekend retreat when he was asked to review several chapters of a renewal book on small groups.

"Mostly I began to think of myself and all the boxes I had built. I felt the real me was cold, dark and lonely. I was really crying for help, and nobody could help me." But what he read about small group interaction intrigued Bangham: "I wished I could get to know some people like that."

The next day, Haney talked about conversational prayer and the need for people to talk to God just like they talk to each other. Bangham opened up, and all his pent-up inner emotions came spilling out.

"Before, I had intellectually accepted Christ and believed in God, but it was never a gut-level thing. That night, it was," he confided. Bangham had been praying all that weekend that he would really get to know someone. Then Bill Lively, a librarian for an aeronautical research firm in Annapolis, came up to Bangham and told him: "I want you to be my friend." Both wept unashamedly, Bangham recalled.

After the retreat, Bill and Dianne and the Livelys talked long into the night about their Christian experiences. Several other couples from the retreat joined them in organizing a small group for sharing and growing in their faith. Small groups have since been an integral part of Bangham's life.

At first, Bangham did not want to open up with the group. It was too "painful and threatening. I thought I could relate to Bill Lively, but I wasn't sure I could relate to the group." Insecure, Bangham lashed out by ripping apart the ideas expressed by other group members.

"But they loved me anyway in spite of myself," he confided. "Finally I began to feel I could be the real me--I didn't have to play either the nice guy or the nasty guy--I'd just be Bill Bangham . . . It gave me some idea of what the Father's love is. I can't think of anything I gave them, only things I received.

"It's ironic," Bangham continued, "Before the retreat, I had always been a loner. I'd often withdraw and hide. I just didn't want to have much to do with people. Now my life is people . . . My weakness has always been relationships with people, but now that's my ministry and my strength.

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(BP) Photo mailed to Baptist state papers 6-28-76.

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'Why A Dentist?--Just to
Support the Lord's Work'

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By Larry Jerden

SMYRNA, Tenn. (BP)--Spend only a few moments with Dr. Morris Frank, a dentist here, and you quickly learn the most important facet of his diversified lifestyle is dedication to Jesus Christ.

As the 40-year-old Baptist layman treats patients in his new two-story office building near this Middle Tennessee town's hospital, he easily brings his Christian life into almost any conversation because he's always involved in several aspects of church life.

As vice-president and president-elect of Tennessee Baptists' Brotherhood, he will be state-wide president in 1976-77. He's an active Gideon; a trustee of Harrison-Chilhowee Academy, a Tennessee Baptist Convention institution; on the board of the United Tennessee League, a Christian anti-alcohol and drug organization; an active campaigner against pornography; and is constantly invited to speak in churches.

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As a deacon at Smyrna's First Baptist Church, he has held numerous congregational leadership posts. But "right now," he declared between patients, "my call is to missions support... I believe I can do more good promoting missions in churches here than I could practicing dentistry and evangelism in one spot on the mission field."

In fact, though, Dr. Frank has already been on the foreign mission field. A 1972 trip to Rhodesia gave him a month-long dose of treating dental patients in that African nation, and it only reinforced his determination to serve overseas again. "I treated about 650 people, most of whom had never seen a dentist before."

Had he known of the opportunity for dentists to serve on the mission field when he was graduated from the University of Tennessee College of Dentistry in Memphis, he and Betty, his wife, would probably have volunteered, the dentist said. "By the time I heard about it, my family was too far underway and things just weren't moving in that direction."

To Dr. Frank, a lesson exists for laymen. "I think a prime responsibility of laymen is to make young people aware of mission opportunities," he declared. "As laymen, we need to take young people to missions conferences, to Glorieta (N.M.) and Ridgecrest (N.C.) (Baptist conference centers), etc. We can usually tell when they are about ready to make a decision like that, and that's when we need to take them."

"You might wonder why I got so materialistic," he continued, waving an arm at the modern-looking office facility. "With this, I hope in 10 years to be able to go to the mission field... That'll give us a good 15 years to serve on the field."

Whether that particular plan comes to fruition, however, won't determine Dr. Frank's missionary service of one sort or another.

"I would like to serve somewhere on a short-term basis every year," he declared. "I know several dentists who do. Some go to the same place every year and others to different locations"

In the meantime, he promotes missions at home.

"It seems like I've shown my slides of missions in Rhodesia 400 times," he declared. A layman telling about missions may be more effective than even the testimony of a "real-live" missionary, Dr. Frank feels. "When I talk about missions to other laymen, they believe me," he explained.

"You know, I feel there has been a great upsurge in missions support on the part of laymen," he reflected. "But I've also seen some downturn on the part of some pastors. They get all caught up in the 'us and ours' syndrome and they lose their concern for missions."

In promoting missions, Dr. Frank is sold on the value of the short-term as well as career approach. "I think the most valuable contribution a layman can make is to go on a short-term assignment and then come back and tell others about it," he said. "The real value is when you return...and tell other laymen; they listen."

Dr. Frank is involved in Christian projects at home that cut across denominational lines, but when it comes to Southern Baptists' overseas mission; he is convinced it should be done through the denomination's Foreign Mission Board. He also feels a "primary call right now to promote and support state missions more than any other."

In his quest for missions involvement, Dr. Frank sees every opportunity as demanding his full energies. He has little time for titles and jobs that don't also mean service.

"I can't see having titles just for the honor," he said. "I think our Brotherhood officers at state and regional levels should work. And I think the same thing about trustees of our Baptist institutions," he commented. "I feel too often the institutions seek board members more on the basis of their ability to help financially than on the basis of spirituality. I think we can have both."

While the geographic span of the dentist's mission effort is great, many of his efforts begin right in Smyrna. A silent form of witness permeates his office.

"The most read item in our waiting room is the Gideon Bible," he noted, reflecting that he didn't think it was because the reader was about to see the dentist. "We don't keep any magazines with liquor ads in them. If people want to read those, they can go to another dentist."

He also has Christian literature intermingled with the other magazines. And devotionals are part of the office routine.

For at least 10 years, Dr. Frank has been involved in fighting pornography in his town. He belongs to an organization that keeps tabs on the literature sold on local book racks, and, with some success, has kept the worst off of them.

"But you can't talk about supporting missions or fighting pornography or any other kind of work for the Lord without prayer," He cautioned. "I believe strongly in the role of Christians in politics, for instance, and as part of that I have joined with some others who believe in praying that God will raise up Christian leaders and purge the bad ones."

"Why am I a dentist?" he reflected. "Why, I just do that to support the Lord's work."

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(BP) Photo dated 6-30-76 mailed to Baptist state paper

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Baptists and Congressmen
Breakfast in Washington

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By W. Barry Garrett

WASHINGTON (BP)--Twenty-one U. S. representatives and senators joined some Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) leaders in a Southern Baptist Fellowship Breakfast here three days before the nation's giant Fourth of July Bicentennial celebration.

Righteousness was the theme and prayer and fellowship were the agenda for the meeting, presided over by C. Welton Gaddy of Nashville, director of Christian citizenship development for the SBC Christian Life Commission. Speakers included James L. Sullivan, SBC president, and Foy Valentine, executive secretary of the Christian Life Commission.

"Our prayers are for you as you fulfill your awesome responsibilities and for the nation as it celebrates in its birth, remembers its first 200 years, and enters its third century," Gaddy said to the legislators.

Valentine's remarks took on added significance in the light of the scandals of Watergate and the more recent sex scandals in Congress that have been reported by the media.

He sounded the keynote of the meeting as he declared, "National righteousness has often seemed in recent times to be ready for the garage sale of history. It must be recovered if there is to be a tricentennial celebration."

"National righteousness is not something we have to cultivate in order to ward off Communism. It is not merely a part of our arsenal of weapons for national survival or for discreet national aggression," Valentine warned.

However, he continued, "For national survival, righteousness is fundamental not ornamental. Any nation that eats the apple of unrighteousness will surely die. National righteousness moves in the direction of right civic relationships, right social conduct, right public behavior," he said.

"National righteousness is related to personal righteousness, as fruits are related to roots. In national righteousness, the body politic chooses morality over mammon; it leans towards justice instead of exploitation; it elects freedom rather than tyranny; and it opts for order in preference to anarchy," Valentine declared.

In a fellowship testimony, Sullivan of Nashville, newly-elected president of the Southern Baptist Convention, paid tribute to the forces that have shaped his life. All of these focused on the persons who worked with him in and through the structure of the church, he explained.

The gathering was the second congressional fellowship breakfast sponsored by the Christian Life Commission, the SBC's social concerns agency. The first was two years earlier. Others may be planned for the future.

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(BP) Photo will be mailed to Baptist state papers.

High Court Rules On Free Press, Privacy

By Stan L. Haste

WASHINGTON (BP)--The U. S. Supreme Court ruled here that judges may not forbid the press from covering the pretrial portions of a criminal case.

In another important action, the Supreme Court held that police may search an individual's office for personal business records without violating the Constitution's ban on "unreasonable searches and seizures."

The important First Amendment case on pretrial reporting was decided by a unanimous high court, although four of the nine justices chose to submit separate opinions giving their own reasons for agreeing to the decision.

At issue was a gag rule imposed on the press by a Nebraska state judge in a 1975 mass murder case in which a family of six was slain. The murders occurred in the small town of Sutherland, Neb., and the judge feared that wide pretrial publicity would undermine the accused slayer's constitutional right to a fair trial.

Earlier, the Nebraska Supreme Court had upheld portions of the judge's order, prohibiting journalists from reporting confessions of the defendant to police or any third parties except newsmen themselves, or other facts "strongly implicative" of the accused.

Although the trial of Erwin Charles Simants has since concluded, the high court ruled that the issue is still a live one. Simants was convicted and sentenced to death.

Chief Justice Warren E. Burger, who wrote the court's opinion, addressed the conflict in the case between the First Amendment's free speech guarantee and the Sixth Amendment's guarantee to a fair and impartial trial. He noted that the founding fathers declined to resolve the "potential conflicts" despite the fact that they were "fully aware" they would occur.

"It is not for us to rewrite the Constitution," Burger said, "by undertaking what they declined."

In a concurring opinion, Justice William J. Brennan Jr. went further than the chief justice, stating that any prior restraint on the press in criminal cases violates the First Amendment and is therefore unacceptable.

Referring to a voluntary code in Nebraska between members of the legal profession and journalists, Brennan cited what he called "a commendable acknowledgement by the media that constitutional prerogatives bring enormous responsibilities."

Accordingly, Brennan went on, "the decision of what, when, and how to publish is for editors, not judges."

The court ruled, 7-2, in the search and seizure case that the conviction of a Maryland attorney for defrauding a client in the purchase of a piece of real estate stands, despite the fact that police seized evidence from his office unrelated to the transaction and used it as evidence against him at his trial.

The attorney, Peter Andresen, had also argued that the police action in effect made him a witness against himself in violation of the Constitution's Fifth Amendment.

The majority ruled, however, that Andresen was not actually "asked to say or to do anything." Because the records seized contained statements "voluntarily committed to writing," Andresen was not forced to testify against himself, the court held.

The court also ruled that Andresen's claim against "unreasonable searches and seizures" was unfounded in that the evidence seized was all related to the attorney's scheme to defraud the customer.

In a dissenting opinion, Brennan argued that the warrants used to seize papers from Andresen's office were "impermissibly general" and that his constitutional "zone of privacy" was violated.