



BAPTIST PRESS

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Baptist Women Support
Colson Prison Ministry

By Carol Franklin

WASHINGTON (BP)--Furlough from prison? No guards? No bedcheck? You've got to be kidding.

Charles Colson, convicted Watergate conspirator, wasn't kidding. And he finally persuaded Norman Carlson, director of the bureau of prisons, to allow the wardens at each federal prison or correctional institution to let two men leave prison for two weeks of intensive Bible study and training in witness methods in the nation's capital.

Several groups have now been commissioned as missionaries to the institutions where they are serving sentences and many churches are discovering a new ministry.

A lot of "consciousness-raising" has been going on in area churches. "You have reminded us that prisons exist," one woman told the most recent group at a luncheon at the D. C. Baptist Building. "We just forget if we don't have someone there ourselves."

No one who met these 11 men will easily forget them or their testimonies.

Luis, Cuban by birth, told about being raised to believe in sorcery and witchcraft--"anything that didn't look like God." When he moved to New York City he became involved in street crime.

"I was tough. On the street, in prison--I was tough. That made it hard to accept Jesus. I didn't want to look like a sissy. But a brother came and told me he knew God was working in my heart. And now I know the fulfillment of my creation," Luis said softly.

"My family knew for sure I had gone crazy when I started talking about Jesus," Luis said. "They all came to look me over at the prison. Now my Mother says, 'Too bad I wasn't crazy like you 30 years ago.'"

At the commissioning service the evening before the men returned to prison, Eddie, a former New York City policeman, thanked God he had been arrested. From the audience came a strong, though tearful, "praise the Lord (exclamatory)" and Eddie introduced his wife.

Cal also had his family with him. He sang his testimony, a song he had written after his family arrived. "My son said, 'Daddy, hurry home, we've got things to do.' No matter what my day holds, Lord, I thank you."

Cal also sang the group's theme song. "Show me the stairway I have to climb. Please help me to take one day at a time, sweet Jesus. Yesterday's gone, tomorrow may never be mine. Help us today, show us the way, one day at a time."

"It's a miracle that we're here," Dean said. "Chuck (Colson) saw the need for prisoners to share their hurts with someone and we have actually gotten to have input with Norm Carlson about conditions in the prisons as well as with the parole board."

I asked Dean about the physical arrangements while they were in Washington. He assured me that they were indeed on their own.

"You could leave if you wanted to?"

"Oh, yes, easily."

"Have you thought about it?"

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"No, why would I? I can't run from myself. Before, after I had been convicted, I thought about it. There were places I could have gone in California or New York, but now I have no reason to."

With a grin, Dean added, "besides, in August I go before the parole board." Then he laughed and said, "I'm only kidding. The Lord is with me wherever I am, no matter what the parole board decides."

Lionel agreed that the two weeks in Washington had been a real "high", a great spiritual retreat, but he expected the blessings to continue after he went back to prison. "The Lord has been blessing me for these two weeks. When I go back He will bless my brothers through me. I can't predict how I will feel but I don't think it will change for a while because the Lord is so close to me."

Michael, a young man who hopes to build his own construction business when he is released, told the luncheon group, "there is so much structure to prison life--even the spiritual side. Your spiritual needs really aren't met. You need time alone with the preacher to really talk. We watch a lot of TV, spend eight hours at a job and get shuffled back and forth to the chow hall. But there's nothing personal. We need personal contact with people on the outside."

It is that personal contact that the Baptist women of D. C. hope to provide. They have organized the meals for the men during their two-week stay in Washington. This is leading to a prison ministry in area institutions. One group has begun a crafts program at a women's detention center. Another program for another institution is in the planning stages.

"Prison Fellowship (Colson's ministry) has been the instrument to introduce the idea into our churches," Vivian Nielsen, mission action chairman for the D. C. Baptist Women, said. "The barrier of fear has been broken."

Committee Blocks Move
For Vatican Ambassador

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By Barry Garrett

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WASHINGTON (BP)--An 1867 law prohibiting the use of public funds for an ambassador to the Vatican will remain in effect, according to an action by the conference committee from the Senate and the House of Representatives on the appropriation bill for the Department of State.

The Senate version of the bill contained a section that would have repealed the 1867 law. This repeal would have made it possible for the Congress to provide money for a full ambassador to the Pope.

The conference committee voted to delete the repeal of the 1867 provision, thus allowing the prohibition of the spending of public funds for a Vatican ambassador to stand. When a conference committee agrees on a reconciliation of differences between Senate and House versions of a bill, there can be no further amendments to the bill. Both houses of Congress then have the choice of voting yea or nay on the bill reported out of conference committee.

President Carter has named David M. Walters as his "personal representative" to the Pope. Walters succeeds Henry Cabot Lodge who filled the same position under Presidents Nixon and Ford.

If the proposed repeal of the 1867 law had passed Congress and had been signed by the President, the way would have been opened for the President to upgrade his "personal representative" to the Pope to full ambassadoral rank if he had chosen to do so. As it stands at present, the President is blocked from appointing a full ambassador to the Vatican because he is prohibited by law from spending public funds in that manner.

The defeat of the proposed repeal of the 1867 law came after the members of the conference committee received numerous communications from concerned citizens throughout the nation asking them to delete the controversial section from the appropriations bill for the state department.



July 26, 1977

Child Abuse: Why and
What You Can Do About It

By Liz Skillen

THOMASVILLE, N.C. (BP)--A mother and her two-year-old son enter the emergency room. "He fell down some stairs," she tells the doctor.

An examination tells a different story--too many scars from burns and cuts, too many bruises not quite healed, and x-rays reveal cracked and broken bones that mended on their own.

"Child abuse is rapidly becoming one of the nation's major social crimes against children," said Robert Stump, social work coordinator for the Baptist Children's Homes of North Carolina. "Statistics suggest that child abuse is probably the most common cause of children's death today."

Why?

"There are a number of reasons why parents abuse their children," explained William Springs Jr., psychologist for the children's homes. "And there are a number of ways they can do it. Physical abuse is only the most obvious."

Mental illness is one explanation for abuse. In these cases, Springs says, the child is usually removed from the home.

"The old saying, 'The sins of the father are visited upon the children,' can explain another reason for severe treatment of a child," the psychologist said. "If a man grew up with beatings, chances are he'll beat his own children. Subconsciously he thinks, 'I was abused, therefore, I will abuse.'"

Harsh punishment can also be the result of immaturity. "A good example of this," the psychologist noted, "is the rejected mother syndrome. A mother tries unsuccessfully to comfort her crying baby. When the infant keeps crying, she immaturely perceives this as the baby's lack of love for her. Her reaction to this perceived rejection is to lash out, to beat the baby."

Springs cited another example of this "projection" into the child. When one mate is mad at the other, he or she can turn on the child, illogically blaming it for the argument. Punishing the child is not only rationalized by this thinking, but serves as a release for the parent's anger, he explained.

A parent's feelings of guilt can also be projected into a child, resulting in abuse. "In some instances," the counselor reported, "when a child fails at something or misbehaves, an abusive parent will think other people see that as failure in himself."

Compared to complex reasons such as these, low frustration tolerance is a relatively simple explanation for abuse. "Some people," Springs said, "can take just so much crying, yelling before they react. Sometimes that reaction is violent."

Isolated instances of these types of behavior do not necessarily constitute abuse. Child abuse is defined as habitual behavior that is harmful to the growth and well being of a child. According to the psychologist, this definition includes psychological abuse. Repeated emotional punishment, Springs says, can be just as harmful to a child, but it is harder to prove in court.

Some states are trying to make it easier for concerned persons to do something about the problem. In North Carolina, in fact, a Child Abuse Reporting Law, passed in 1971, holds professionals and lay citizens legally responsible for reporting suspected abuse or neglect. Other states have enacted similar laws.

The North Carolina statute has had some impact on the public. During the first fiscal year after the reporting law passed, 6,875 abuse and neglect cases were reported; last fiscal year, 13,987 suspected cases were sent in to county social services.

"Both reports and cases confirmed have increased tremendously in the past five years," Gene Herrell, director of Caldwell County social services said. "But it's hard to verify that there is more abuse. It's possible that we are just finding out about what has been going on all along."

But Herrell doesn't think so. Society places more and more pressure on today's family unit, he says. And the family unit is not as close or strong as it once was in America. "I think it is these pressures," he continued, "that are responsible for our rising abuse and neglect figures."

Social service departments, however, still fight a battle to get people to call in their suspicions. Many people don't want to get involved. What they fail to realize is that by keeping quiet they are already involved in the possible mistreatment of a child. And they are preventing help from reaching abusive parents.

"We are not out to punish the abuser," Herrell pointed out, "but to help him. Usually there are many other problems that cause neglect or abuse. We can help him deal with these through family life counseling and other resources--but only if the situation is brought to our attention."

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Good Business Practices
A Must for Churches

By Nancy McGough

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LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--Good business practices are one witness some churches neglect, asserted Allen Graves during a "Church and Denominational Business Management" course at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary here.

Graves, dean of the School of Religious Education at Southern Seminary, is teaching the course this summer to give students practical suggestions on ways to improve the business procedures of a church.

"Good business practices are a way of demonstrating the gospel we profess," he is convinced, adding, "A church that does not properly manage its financial affairs soon loses its credibility in the community."

Graves gives three criteria to use in determining good business practices: First, does it enhance the integrity and spiritual growth of each church member. Second, does it enhance the fellowship of the people of God, and third, does it enhance Christian mission--does it achieve the purpose for which Christ first established the church.

Graves points out that some churches use questionable practices in order to achieve ends they feel are worthwhile. Examples he gives include a bus program in which children are bribed to ride the buses. He also points to "borderline advertising."

"Slogans are used that assume one church above and beyond all other churches is the friendliest church in town, or that it has a certain program that is not elsewhere available. The church in some ways attempts to paint itself as somehow superior to other congregations.

"There is no justification for using unethical or inappropriate means to achieve worthy ends," Graves said.

"The church has the moral responsibility of maintaining integrity, and doing in a responsible way the things we've committed ourselves to do."

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