



BAPTIST PRESS

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Morgan: Avoid Creedalism,
Stay True To the Issues

RIDGECREST, N.C. (BP)--Southern Baptists have been warned to avoid creedalism, but to stay true to the fundamental issues that unite.

Darold Morgan of Dallas, president of the SBC Annuity Board, called on Southern Baptists to test what is preached and believed by asking themselves the question: "Where does it put Jesus Christ?"

Morgan, a former pastor, was Bible teacher for Home Missions Week at Ridgecrest Conference Center.

Morgan told the more than 2,000 participants there is a great deal of legalism among Christians of the 20th century. "People want a haven of rest in the negative image of being secure in Christ by not doing this and not doing that. A mature Christian is one who has risen above legalism," he said.

Teaching throughout the week from Galatians, Morgan referred to the book as an account of how early Christians, and especially Paul, dealt with controversy.

He said controversy is not all bad, for "out of it you learn some positive lessons. If motivation is right, if our concern for the message is right, some truths crystalize that are of great and lasting value."

Morgan feels controversy produces some doctrinal understandings. "Some of the current fallout (from the controversy over inerrancy) produces a fresh and beautiful recommitment to the absolute authority of God's word, and that's great, good news," he said.

"Every last one of us has lived long enough to realize that the fundamental premise of what we teach, preach and believe is the divine, holy, authoritative word of God. But again, we must test everything by the issue, 'Where does it put Jesus Christ?'"

Morgan cited historian Walter B. Shurden as showing controversies are inevitable; they are painful but profitable, often embodied in powerful personalities.

As a youth in the 1930s, Morgan said he lived through the controversy over fundamentalism led by J. Frank Norris of Fort Worth, Texas. Morris, according to Morgan, shredded anybody who disagreed with him.

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"You talk about the sweetness and the grace of Jesus Christ—that did not touch that old savage individual," Morgan said. "But out of it we were brought back again to some of the fundamental issues that unite us as Baptists, but we avoided creedalism."

Instead, Morgan called for a commitment to the word of God that is exhibited in a commitment to missions. "This will hold our denomination to the fundamentals, especially when we see the challenges of the age," he said.

"When Baptists have the facts, grounded in the gospel of Christ, they have the courage to go on to their bold mission responsibility."

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Johnson Acting
Beacon Editor

Baptist Press
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PHOENIX, Ariz. (BP)--Jack Johnson, executive secretary of the Arizona Southern Baptist Convention, is acting as editor of the Baptist Beacon during an 18-month reevaluation of the newspaper.

Following the retirement of C.L. Pair as editor in June, the convention executive board hired Elizabeth Young as news writer and journalistic consultant on an 18-month contract. Young is a May graduate of Baylor University and former summer intern for the Rocky Mountain Baptist in Colorado.

Publication of the Beacon, with circulation of 12,600, has been cut from 48 to 36 issues annually.

Johnson said a subcommittee from the executive board will study the purpose and function of the newspaper extensively, including such things as the format, frequency of publication, paper stock, printer and billing procedures.

Johnson said he hopes eventually to hire a public relations consultant who also would be newspaper editor.

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White House Conference
Shifts To Implementation

By Larry Chesser

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WASHINGTON (BP)--The White House Conference on Families national task force moved from talk to action in a two-day meeting.

The 117-member task force sought during the session to insure the final report—expected in late September—will accurately reflect and summarize the recommendations of three national meetings this summer. It also discussed strategy for implementing its recommendations.

During the two-day gathering, a Southern Baptist ethicist said the White House conference represents both a challenge and opportunity for the religious community.

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"The church has a special responsibility to increase its efforts to help families now that many needs have been identified," said Harry N. Hollis Jr., director of family and special moral concerns for the Southern Baptist Convention's Christian Life Commission.

Hollis, the only Southern Baptist member of the 40-person national advisory committee, challenged Southern Baptists to seek ways to implement the recommendations of the conference that "they find in keeping with biblical values and reject those which are not."

Pointing to such recommendations as drug abuse prevention, revision of tax policy to support families, responsible treatment of the family by the media, and sensitivity to the impact of government regulations on the family, Hollis said, "There are a number of recommendations of the White House Conference on Families that Southern Baptists can enthusiastically support."

Hollis added Baptists already have been involved in strengthening the family in some areas recommended by the White House conference but noted the "value of the White House Conference on Families is that now the national spotlight is put on these issues that many of us have been working with for quite a while and we now have an opportunity to make some changes for good."

WHCF chairman Jim Guy Tucker, a former congressman from Arkansas, said the task force meeting represented a shift from listening and recommending "to acting, implementing and advocating."

"We are at a crossroad," Tucker said. "Families are now moving into the center of public debate and discussions."

Both Hollis and Tucker emphasized the implementation process needs to occur in both the public and private sectors.

Tucker said the recommendations stemming from the three summer conferences reflect "a mandate for change that our public and private policy makers should be aware of."

"I think its very important that institutions other than government—the church, professional organizations, local community groups—continue to work to strengthen the family," Hollis said. "We should not give government the prime responsibility for helping the family in America."

The report will rank the recommendations coming from the Baltimore, Minneapolis and Los Angeles meetings by percentage of approval of the 2,000 delegates to the summer conferences.

The four top recommendations, each of which received 92 percent or better approval at the conferences, included family oriented personnel policies, drug and alcohol abuse prevention, tax revision in support of families and tax policies to support care for aging and handicapped persons.

In approving the structure of the report, the task force was not permitted to introduce new issues or change the content or language of recommendations coming from the summer conferences.

Among its actions, the task force voted to include in the report a statement adopted in Minneapolis conference defining the family as "two or more persons related by blood, heterosexual marriage, adoption or extended families." The definition was not adopted at Baltimore or Los Angeles.

Hollis, who spoke in favor of including the Minneapolis definition in the report, said it is in keeping to the traditional biblical view of the family.

The Southern Baptist Convention, in its annual meeting in St. Louis in June, adopted a resolution affirming the biblical understanding of family and requested the Nashville-based Christian Life Commission to keep Southern Baptists informed about the conference.

Throughout the delegate-selection process and the summer conferences the White House conference has been hit by controversy over such issues as abortion, the Equal Rights Amendment, and the definition of family.

Tucker indicated the White House conference did little to settle the disputes that divide the American public on these volatile issues, but claimed it did produce a consensus on a broad range of issues affecting the family.

"There are some differences which could not be harmonized," Hollis said. "But I think Southern Baptists should carefully examine the recommendations coming out of the White House conference and work for what they can accept. I have a very positive view on this conference."

Tucker said the conference agenda "will disappoint those on both extremes who see families as a new ideological code word."

"There is a lot of talk these days about who is pro-family," he told the task force. "If you want to know who is pro-family, look beyond the rhetoric and ask who is hard at work at the modest but crucial proposals made by the delegates to the White House Conference on Families."

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Scattered Church
Chaplain's Parish

By Dan Martin

Baptist Press
8/21/80

ATLANTA (BP)--Day in and day out, Denny Spear believes in lay people.

"Sometimes church people give the impression that they believe the world out there is evil and corrupt and they must send chaplains into it to straighten it out," Spear insists.

"But let me tell you, there are some very good people out there in the world. They are facing and making tough decisions each day, struggling with how to be effective Christians in the business world."

As director of chaplaincy services for the Days Inn and the Day Companies, a corporate giant which is the nation's sixth largest full-service lodging chain, Spear is not trying to "straighten out" the world, but he is trying to minister to the businessmen who are struggling with being effective Christians in business.

A tall, dapper, middle-aged man, Spear believes in being in the world but not of the world. He also believes in what he calls the "scattered church," explaining that the church comes together once a week to worship and celebrate and then scatters out into the world.

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"God must expect more of the scattered church than he does of the institutional church, because he gave it six times more time," Spear says.

Spear is an ordained Southern Baptist minister and a product of Southern Baptist education. He graduated from Wake Forest College and Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. He also was pastor of several small, rural Baptist churches in North and South Carolina before becoming pastor of the prestigious Dunwoody Baptist Church in Atlanta's affluent northside.

"The most exciting part of my job is seeing Christian people wrestling to make a way in the world, to make the tough decisions, to be Christians in the marketplace," he says.

As head of chaplaincy services for the 300-motel chain, Spear directs a program of spiritual emphasis which originated with the chain's founder, the late Cecil Day, a Southern Baptist layman.

The program includes distribution of Scriptures through the motels, counseling with employees, and recruiting and supervising ministers who serve as volunteer chaplains.

Spear and his two associates work closely with the volunteer chaplains and have established a network of ministry through which they can refer persons. With 60,000-70,000 guests in the motels every night, the chaplains often stay busy.

Spear tells of a young couple who came from "somewhere in Tennessee" to visit Atlanta and the Six Flags amusement park. While they were in one of the motel units, their small child drowned.

"We helped them make all the arrangements and then called one of the volunteer chaplains in their hometown so they could receive help and support when they got back home," he explains.

Spears says he entered the chaplaincy for different reasons than many persons.

"Some guys get fed up with the institutional church and go into the industrial chaplaincy as a way of getting away from the local church," he says. "Some other guys play golf with the executives at the country club and think chaplaincy is interaction with the executives. That's not true. You have to deal with people at all levels. We have some extremely good Christian people who are washing dishes or making beds or cutting hedges."

Spear doesn't only work with the lay people, but sees his job as "an opportunity to say something back to the institutional church about the way God is at work out here."

"The church needs to know what is happening and how it can undergird the missionary force that comes out into the world every day," he says.

"I am not critical of the institutional church. I love it. It is necessary, but it needs to support and encourage the work of those who live and function in the world."