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# -- FEATURES

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SBC Executive Committee  
460 James Robertson Parkway  
Nashville, Tennessee 37219  
(615) 244-2355  
Wilmer C. Fields, Director  
Dan Martin, News Editor  
Norman Jameson, Feature Editor

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Real Happiness  
Spelled J-E-S-U-S

By Bonnie Sparrow

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--A fast lifestyle, a good job in Hong Kong and a wealthy boyfriend who showered her with expensive gifts and talked about marriage should have made Rita Nightingale very happy. But it didn't.

It was only while in a Bangkok prison, accused of smuggling heroin, that she learned real happiness is spelled J-E-S-U-S.

"I should have been very happy," the attractive young Englishwoman said. "But I still would go home from my job, or from dinner at fine restaurants, and cry. Something was missing from my life."

She learned what it was while reading the story of Jesus' life in Robert Laidlaw's "The Reason Why" in prison.

"As I read, I stopped saying, 'God, why did this happen to me?' and started saying, 'Lord, what have I done for you?' and right there, all by myself, I gave my life to him," she recounted for "MasterControl", a half-hour radio program produced and distributed to 872 stations by the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission.

In February, Nightingale will be heard telling listeners of an early marriage that failed, a life of travel which took her over much of Southeast Asia, and a search for that missing element in her life.

She did not know a great deal about her boyfriend's private life but she accepted his invitation to accompany him on a trip to Paris and London because she could visit her family in Lancashire.

The day they were to leave, he brought the tickets by, told her he couldn't go and insisted she use her tickets. One of his friends was traveling to Bangkok on the same flight and they could go that far together. Reluctant, she finally consented.

In Bangkok, Nightingale's hotel room was on the same floor as her traveling companion's. On the last day of her stay, he suggested she move her luggage to his room and check out early to avoid having to pay for an additional day there.

"I did, and we went out to dinner," she said. "When we came back, I showered and dressed and we went to the airport."

The customs agent found heroin hidden in the lining of her luggage. "I had no idea the heroin was there," Miss Nightingale said. "I couldn't believe it."

When she returned with the police to the hotel, her traveling companion denied knowing her. The hotel employees remembered the two of them spending time together and he, too, was arrested. Their friend in Hong Kong also was arrested.

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A month later Nightingale went to court, accompanied by a lawyer from the British Embassy. The two men arrested with her were not there. "I learned later they had paid off the police and were released for lack of evidence. After all, they still had me, and there I was with this heroin found in my luggage, pleading 'not guilty.'"

She returned to jail to await the outcome of her day in court. "I was very angry and I couldn't understand why this had happened to me," she said. "But then I found the Lord."

One week after turning her life over to God, she was sentenced to 20 years and moved to the Bangkok Women's Prison. There 30 women shared a small room where a bucket of water was used for bathing and toilet facilities were primitive.

During that time Southern Baptist missionaries Gladys and Jack Martin of Pineville, La., became better acquainted with her.

Martin, director of the Baptist Center in Bangkok, also is involved in two prison ministries there. His wife heard about Rita while conducting services at the women's prison.

"When we first met her, she wouldn't come to the services," Mrs. Martin recalled. "She said we were nutty. After her conversion we began to work with her and contributed to her spiritual growth."

During the three years Nightingale remained in prison, the Martins took her food, Bibles and other books. They prayed with her during the one two-hour visit they were allowed each month.

"Rita witnessed inside the prison," Mrs. Martin said. "She invited many of the other women to the services and led a number of them to the Lord."

The British Embassy finally appealed her case all the way to the king of Thailand. "Everyone told me to forget it, that the king might pardon a murderer but he never pardoned drug offenders," Nightingale said.

But she was pardoned and today is free. She is in the United States through December, meeting with the Charles Colson Prison Fellowship in Washington. She plans to work part-time with a prison fellowship when she returns to England in January.

She is not bitter about what happened. "When you become a Christian everything changes, you see things differently," she said. "Before, I kept going my own way, never stopped to think where I was going or what I was doing. But what I have in the world is nothing compared to what you can have when you live for Christ."

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(BP) photo mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Radio and Television Commission.

SBC, Others To Examine  
Government Intervention

Baptist Press  
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WASHINGTON (BP)—Southern Baptists will join representatives of more than 50 religious groups in a conference on government intervention in religious affairs Feb. 11-13 at Bethesda, Md., a Washington, D.C., suburb.

With 450 Protestant, Catholic and Jewish participants representing religious bodies with more than 121 million adherents, sponsors believe the conference will be one of the most inclusive gatherings in the country's history. The conference will focus on a wide range of issues from tax exemption to governmental restraint on "political" activities of religious bodies.

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Harold C. Bennett, executive secretary-treasurer of the SBC Executive Committee, cited the importance of the conference, calling government intrusion in religious affairs "one of the most critical issues" facing Southern Baptists and the entire religious community during the decade of the '80s.

"Churches and the denomination must be good citizens," Bennett said, "but we also must be left free to function without government intervention."

Bennett said the conference is needed because "in recent months there have been a number of cases where the government has in fact intervened into the religious affairs of several denominations."

"I support strongly the principles related to the separation of church and state and religious freedom," he said.

Other participating religious groups include the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A., the United States Catholic Conference, the Synagogue Council of America, the National Association of Evangelicals and the Lutheran Council in the U.S.A.

The conference will open with a keynote address on "government as big brother to religious bodies" by prominent church-state attorney William Bentley Ball of Harrisburg, Pa.

Among the other topics to be discussed by an impressive list of church-state experts are: regulation of charitable solicitations, lobby disclosure requirements, unemployment compensation taxation of religious agencies, Internal Revenue Service treatment of religious bodies and their integrated auxiliaries, state regulation of parochial schools and intelligence agency use of clergy as informants.

Bennett expects Southern Baptists to benefit from as well as contribute to the success of the conference. The Baptist executive said actions or recommendations of the conference will be forwarded to the SBC and other participating denominations for "possible consideration and action."

Admission to the conference is by invitation only. The SBC is allowed 35 participants based on a quota system that allows each of the national religious groups to issue invitations on the basis of its membership.

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Southern Baptist Chaplain  
Helps Police Nab Stranger

By Brenda Hall

Baptist Press  
12/22/80

HAYS, Kan. (BP)—Bill Bush admits few people passing through this western Kansas town stop to leave a donation to his church.

"Usually, it's the other way around," laughs the pastor of First Southern Baptist Church.

So, when a stranger called Bush and offered a contribution, Bush decided to check it out. He met the man, elaborately dressed, with a checkbook in hand, in a hotel restaurant.

It was his dress that made Bush more suspicious. "You just don't find that many men wearing burgundy tuxedos at 10 a.m. in a hotel restaurant," the pastor said.

The check was already dated and signed. The man introduced himself and pushed the check across the table to Bush. "Here, you just fill in whatever amount the Lord leads," Bush quoted him as saying.

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He said he was making the contribution in memory of a close friend, a Baptist minister, who had died recently.

Bush returned the check to him, suggesting he might like to designate the amount himself. "So he wrote it out for \$5,000," Bush said.

During an hour and a half conversation, the man told Bush that he was vice president of a Louisiana oil company, that he had married recently and that his bride, his childhood sweetheart, died on their wedding night five days previously in the Las Vegas MGM Grand Hotel fire.

"He didn't seem particularly upset about it, and I knew the fire was more than five days ago," Bush said.

"He said he was 35, but he didn't look any older than 25 to me," Bush said. "He was just a kid, and he said too many things that just didn't make sense."

As they left the hotel, Bush took down the license number from the stranger's car and phoned it in to Hays police. He then took the check to police headquarters. In addition to his pastoral duties, Bush also is chaplain to Hays and Ellis County law enforcement officers.

Within hours, the "generous stranger" was identified as a 21-year-old parolee with four jail escapes on his record. Police say he was using credit cards stolen from a man who befriended him when he was released from an Alabama prison less than a month earlier.

The stranger was arrested in Junction City, Kan., and being held for questioning by authorities in Virginia, California and Kansas.

If he ever returns to Hays, Bush said, "I would like to talk to him again, if it wouldn't interfere with my being a witness in his case."

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(Hall is editorial assistant on the Baptist Digest, journal of the Kansas-Nebraska Baptist Convention.)

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'The Baptist Hour' At 40;  
Getting Better, Not Older

Baptist Press  
12/22/80

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--At 40, you don't get older, you get better.

At least that's what's happening to "The Baptist Hour," a modified radio worship service produced by the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission that begins its 40th year in January.

The initial 13 sermons heard on a live hookup of 17 radio stations in 11 states has grown to a taped production aired weekly on 425 stations in 50 states and 11 countries around the world.

In 1949, "The Baptist Hour" went on the air full time on a paid basis. It was on the American Broadcasting Company's network of 132 stations in 21 states. But the network arrangement soon folded for lack of funds. In 1951, the program was transcribed and circulated to independent stations for public service (free) broadcasting. "The Baptist Hour" has been aired continuously each week since that time.

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In 1969 the Centurymen choir was formed to provide music for the show. The all-male group, which blends the voices of 100 Southern Baptist ministers of music from 21 states, not only gave "The Baptist Hour" distinctively new sounds but led in 1978 to the creation of another Southern Baptist program, "Sounds of the Centurymen." That show currently is on 131 stations.

For many years, different men preached on "The Baptist Hour," each for 13 weeks. M.E. Dodd, then pastor of Shreveport's First Baptist Church, was the first speaker. In 1958 it was decided a permanent speaker would add continuity for listeners and a search began for that person.

Herschel H. Hobbs, pastor of First Baptist Church, Oklahoma City, was selected and served for 18 years. He retired in 1976. Over the years numerous letters from listeners have reached "Baptist Hour" producers. Hobbs recalls one from a listener who reported she was about to commit suicide when something Hobbs said on the radio caught her attention. She listened to the sermon and decided to give God another chance. Her letter described the differences God had made in her life.

The "Baptist Hour" has provided a pulpit for such preaching giants as M.E. Dodd, George W. Truett, R.G. Lee, A.J. Moncrief, C. Oscar Johnson, John H. Buchanan, J. Clyde Turner, C.C. Morris, Ted F. Adams, John R. Sampey, T.L. Holcomb, John L. Hill, Ellis A. Fuller and W.W. Hamilton.

In August 1977, Frank Pollard, then pastor of First Baptist Church, Jackson, Miss., became permanent speaker to replace Hobbs. Pollard is now pastor of First Baptist Church, San Antonio, Texas.

The number of stations airing "The Baptist Hour" has grown, the number of listeners has mushroomed, the sound of music is somewhat different from that 40 years ago, but the message of Jesus is the same—and will be for at least another 40 years.

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(BP) photo mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Radio and Television Commission.

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CORRECTION: In (BP) story mailed 12/16/80 entitled "Arizona Baptists Discuss Aid to New, Dying Churches," please change figure 300 to 30 in graph 10.

Thanks,

Baptist Press