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'Cope' Debuts On ACTS
With Depression Advice

By Greg Warner

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)—In slow, slurred speech, the man on the telephone told of a two-year struggle to cope with his wife's terminal illness. "We're both depressed. I'm just about ready to give up," he said.

"Are you having suicidal thoughts?" the counselor asked.

"Yes."

"Do you have a plan?"

"Nope."

"What kind of things are keeping you alive?"

"Keeping her alive," the man answered.

The caller was one of the first people to seek help through "Cope," the live, call-in counseling program carried nightly on the American Christian Television System. On the other end of the phone line, and seated in front of TV cameras in ACTS' studios, was Frank Minirith, one of two Dallas psychiatrists who were co-hosts for "Cope's" inaugural broadcast on depression.

Minirith and Paul Meier counseled the caller for several minutes on the air, encouraging him to seek psychiatric care for his depression and the help of God to face the inevitable. "If she gets worse, do you know what God wants you to do with your life?" Meier asked. "God's got something for you to do."

Not all the phone calls on "Cope's" first night were so serious. Some dealt with symptoms of teen-age depression, mother-in-law problems, revenge and family conflict. But other calls came from people desperate for help.

"June 29 this depressed, crazy maniac came into a restaurant in North Dallas and killed my baby," a female caller said angrily. "I am very, very bitter. I don't sleep. I stay sick all the time. This has changed my life."

"Anybody who went through what you went through would be angry," Meier said sympathetically. "Don't feel guilty about being angry. Almost all depressions people go through come from holding in anger."

"I have to face this animal later this month," the caller responded, apparently referring to an upcoming trial. "I don't know what I would do to this man."

"There's no way you could humanly get rid of that anger without God's help," Meier said. "If you hold a grudge against him for the rest of your life, it will only hurt you. You need to pray that God will somehow intervene and help you forgive him."

Meier also recommended the woman seek professional counseling to help her deal with the anger.

"These are people with genuine problems calling in and people with real biblical insight and professional ability answering them with a sense of hope," said ACTS President Jimmy R. Allen after the broadcast. "It's a dynamite way of helping people and that's the hallmark of ACTS."

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Allen said "Cope" does not exploit people's problems for the sake of entertainment, but is instead a sincere offer of help. While telephone counseling on TV has its limits, Allen pointed out callers to "Cope" are referred to agencies that offer specific help. They also can write "Cope" for more extensive counseling.

"'Cope' is not a crisis hot line," Allen said, "but our counselors are skilled and ready to help whatever the need."

Meier said the danger that some people will use "Cope" as their last resort means he has to be continually alert to suicidal tendencies in callers. "We shouldn't just give them a biblical Band-Aid and send them on their way," he said.

"I feel a little helplessness with each call," Minirith said. "But every time someone calls, there will be a thousand people that identify with the problem. We can give good, common-sense advice as well as some specifics."

The two co-hosts, whose Minirith Meier Psychiatric Clinic is considered the largest Christian psychiatric clinic in the country, will appear on "Cope" every Monday night. Producer-host Mike Frazier moderates the program, which also included discussions on singleness, chemical dependencies, communicating with teen-agers and retirement during its first week. "Cope" airs Monday-Friday at 10 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time.

ACTS is a network of family and Christian entertainment programs delivered by satellite to 111 cable TV systems and three low-power TV stations which reach a total of 1.9 million homes. The network is operated by the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission.

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Virginia Campus Ministry
Director Dies

Baptist Press
10/10/84

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)—William P. Bonner, 51, director of the department of campus ministry for the Virginia Baptist General Board, died Saturday, Oct. 6, after suffering a heart attack.

In 1969 Bonner was tapped to become associate in the Virginia Baptist General Board department of campus ministry and was promoted to director Oct. 1, 1976.

Survivors include Bonner's wife, Shirley Schmidt Bonner, a son, W. Peyton Bonner Jr., 17; a daughter, Beth Lynn Bonner, 14; his mother, Mrs. Andy L. Bonner of Woodberry, Ga.; two sisters and a brother.

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W.A. Criswell Honored
For Forty Year Pastorate

By Orville Scott

Baptist Press
10/10/84

DALLAS (BP)—The 40th anniversary of W.A. Criswell as pastor of Southern Baptist's largest congregation, First Baptist Church, Dallas, was celebrated Oct. 7.

Since Criswell succeeded the late George W. Truett as pastor Nov. 19, 1944, the church has grown from 7,000 members to 25,000 and the budget from \$200,000 to more than \$12 million.

Members of the church, which occupies more than five city blocks in downtown Dallas, celebrated Criswell's 40th anniversary with an original, humorous musical about his ministry, a concert featuring gospel singer Willa Dorsey and other presentations.

Criswell and his wife, Betty Mae, whom he met and married at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky., 50 years ago, smiled, wiped away tears and applauded. Forty children presented the couple with a rose for each year they have been at the church.

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Criswell was given a 1985 Mercedes Benz and his wife a century old French mantel clock.

Evangelist Billy Graham, who's been a member of First Church, Dallas, since 1951, expressed his appreciation for the Criswells via videotape.

Letters of appreciation came from many people including Texas Gov. Mark White, a Southern Baptist, and President Reagan. Criswell gave the benediction after Reagan's renomination at the August Republican Convention in Dallas.

But Reagan isn't the only political candidate to seek Criswell's blessing. He nearly endorsed Gerald Ford on the steps of the church in 1976 and Menachem Begin honored the white haired Baptist for his support of Israel. And the Vatican set up a last-minute audience for Criswell with Pope Paul VI.

The anniversary theme was "The Forty Years That Began With Prayer" commemorating Criswell's first sermon at the Dallas church. Oldest members recalled their 34-year old preacher's hand shook that day as he read his text, "For there stood by me the angel of God saying fear not." At the conclusion of his message, they said, Criswell fell to his knees, wept audibly and prayed to God for divine guidance.

Adrian Rogers, guest preacher for the 40th anniversary celebration, said, "Dr. Criswell is one of my heroes.... He's had a profound influence on the Southern Baptist Convention, this nation and the world." Rogers, pastor of Bellevue Church, Memphis, Tenn., is a former Southern Baptist Convention president as is Criswell who served from 1968-70.

During the anniversary observance the church also announced the establishment of the W.A. Criswell Endowment Fund for First Baptist Academy and the Criswell Center for Biblical Studies.

Both schools operate in the church's downtown buildings which may increase again with the recent \$4.6 million acquisition of the Salvation Army building adjacent to the church.

Just before the anniversary observance, the 75-year-old Criswell told the Baptist Standard, the official weekly news magazine of Texas Baptists, he still has "one or two more things" he would like to see accomplished before he steps from the scene—or is carried from it. He said he has no plans for retirement.

Criswell said he would like to see a new sanctuary center to seat 2,000 around tables and 3,000 without them and a new education building for children and teenagers.

Second is a new ministry built around small units in the manner of a church in Korea led by Pastor Paul Yunge Cho with more than 300,000 members.

Criswell told the Standard he has been pastor of the same church 40 years (the Southern Baptist average is about two years) because he studies and tries to be a "good pastor."

"I don't have a barrel of sermons and simply turn it over again. I study as much or more now than I ever did in my life."

If he had it to do over again, he wouldn't change anything except "to do more of what I am doing. I would pray more and try to be more like our dear Lord."

Over the years his attitudes have changed on the issues of race relations and divorce.

In 1956, he received national attention when he said integrationists were "dying from the neck up." But during his two terms as president of the Southern Baptist Convention (1968-70) he proclaimed, "The First Baptist Church is now and forever a Philadelphian church of the open door. Anybody can come—and God bless him as he comes."

He had preached against divorce for years, but today the church has a strong ministry to divorced people. What made the difference he says was living through the divorce of his own daughter, Ann—a singer who is a member of the charismatic Church on the Rock in nearby Rockwall. She let her parents adopt her son, Chris, now 25. Another divorce followed her second marriage.

"It just killed me," said Criswell. "It left me with an infinite sympathy for divorced people."

But a point on which he hasn't changed is the errorless, literal truth of the Bible. He told the Standard that changes in the denomination have him "confused."

He said across the years he's seen many Baptist schools lost to liberalism and he hardly recognizes his alma mater, Southern seminary, and Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, N.C.

He fears for the future of Southern Baptists. "I don't know of any denomination that doesn't quiesce...go dead.

"I don't think we will escape it. We get too smart for God. They can call it progressive, being pertinent, modern, up-to-date, addressing our generation; but you know what Spurgeon said, that there is no new theology unless its false. The same gospel that we knew in the days of Paul ought to be the same gospel we do today."

He questions why anyone would be opposed to getting conservatives on convention boards, an effort led by Paige Patterson, president of the Criswell Center for Biblical Studies, and Paul Pressler, a Houston judge.

"What these men are doing is trying to keep our denomination conservative, that's all. And when these liberals say, 'But I am conservative,' we have to redefine our terms and get some other nomenclature for us, because they are not conservative. A 'conservative' is a Bible-believing man, like me."

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(BP) photo mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Texas bureau of Baptist Press

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Criswell Says Seminary
President Should Resign

By Jim Jones

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DALLAS (BP)—W.A. Criswell, pastor of First Baptist Church, Dallas, says a Southern Baptist seminary president should resign if he wants to continue criticizing the denomination's fundamentalist faction.

Criswell said he believes Roy L. Honeycutt, president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., shouldn't criticize the people who pay his salary.

"I have only one objection to it (the criticism)," Criswell said. "He depends upon (th denomination) to pay his salary."

"If he is going to castigate us, I think he should resign, get him another job, and he can say anything about us he wants to," Criswell said.

"But don't depend upon us for his salary."

Criswell made the comment in a wide-ranging interview prior to his 40th anniversary as pastor of the Dallas church, celebrated Oct. 7.

Honeycutt rankled many fundamentalists in his convocation address last month at the Louisville seminary because he criticized what he called an "independent fundamentalist political party" in the denomination.

One of the major leaders of the inerrancy movement is Paige Patterson, Criswell's associate pastor and the president of the Criswell Center for Biblical Studies in Dallas.

Honeycutt said in a telephone interview his remarks have been misinterpreted as criticizing the existence of "fundamentalism" itself in the denomination.

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He said he only attacked the fundamentalist political faction, which he believes is trying to subvert the traditional Baptist diversity of theological beliefs. "I appreciate Dr. Criswell, and he is a part of the diversity of our convention," Honeycutt said.

Honeycutt said the 125-year-old seminary, the oldest in the denomination, has had a tradition of presidents who addressed denomination issues, and he felt it is his responsibility to comment about what he sees as an attempt by a fundamentalist political machine to dominate the convention. "I'm concerned about freedom," Honeycutt said. "There is room for fundamentalists in the convention. I'm for being inclusive, not exclusive."

Honeycutt disagrees with the position that a person paid by the Southern Baptist Convention should not speak out on issues. "That simply undercuts the whole prophetic emphasis of the Old Testament and the witness of the New Testament about bearing witness," he said.

Honeycutt said the use of his statement about "holy war" has been over emphasized and that he was simply using a biblical analogy.

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(Jones is religion editor of the Fort Worth Star-Telegram.)

Francis J. Hobbs, Wife
Of Herschel Hobbs, Dies

C-N

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OKLAHOMA CITY (BP)—Francis J. Hobbs, wife of Herschel H. Hobbs, a former president of the Southern Baptist Convention, died at her home in Oklahoma City Sept. 27.

Mrs. Hobbs, a native of Alabama, was a graduate of Howard University (now Samford University). She married Hobbs in 1927. They had one son, Jerry M. Hobbs, now of Houston.

Hobbs, pastor-emeritus of First Baptist Church in Oklahoma City, was president of the SBC 1962-63. He was chairman of the committee which wrote the Baptist Faith and Message, adopted by the convention in 1963. Hobbs also was a former preacher for the Baptist Hour.

The family has requested memorials be made to the Herschel H. and Frances J. Hobbs Lectureships on Baptist Faith and Heritage at Oklahoma Baptist University.

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