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February 4, 1988

88-19

Gospel Shared In Brazil  
Through Amputee's Story

By Eric Miller

FMB

RECIFE, Brazil (BP)--Brazilians' reactions to a Southern Baptist missionary child with no hands or feet have ranged from fear to fascination. But often the encounters allow his parents to present Christ's message of love.

Philip Newberry, 3, the son of missionaries Randy and Jan Newberry, has been called the "miracle child." After much prayer, he recovered from severe meningitis that had caused portions of his arms and legs to be amputated after gangrene set in. Later, he was fitted with prostheses.

The Newberry family was on furlough when Philip got sick in April 1986. Philip, his parents, and their other children, Joey and Amy, returned to Brazil about a year ago.

"It's quite an experience to be on the streets with Philip because people really stare," his father says. "Everywhere we go, people say, 'Was he born that way or did he have an accident?'"

The Newberrys were walking through a market in Sao Paulo, Brazil, one day when Philip noticed a beggar with a tin can.

"All of a sudden, Philip said, 'Daddy, look, that man doesn't have any feet!' It didn't dawn on Philip that he didn't either," Newberry says.

Philip walked over and talked to the beggar, who was sitting in the street. "It was like there was a bond there," says his mother. The beggar asked how Philip had lost his legs. He was "very excited to see that Philip could walk with his prostheses because this man didn't have any."

They talked with the beggar a few times, telling him how God had spared Philip and that "God has a plan for Philip's life and for every life, this man's life too," Mrs. Newberry says.

With Brazilians "always asking" about Philip, the Newberrys have encountered others with problems. "We were able to minister to one lady who had a little boy who had some mental problems," Mrs. Newberry says. "Her husband had separated (left her) because of the problems with the child."

In another case, a woman begging on the street approached the Newberrys with her hand extended. When she discovered Philip's lack of hands, she was ashamed of herself and turned away.

Philip's preschool classmates have mixed reactions to him. "Sometimes they are afraid of him; he looks different," says his mother.

Other children want to help him all the time, she adds. They bring toys to him. A girl had a piece of candy for him, and instead of handing it to him, she put it in his mouth. However, Philip is able to play with toys and eat with no assistance.

"There are some who see absolutely no difference in Philip," Mrs. Newberry explains. "One little boy told him one day, 'I can run faster than you can.' The child spoke to him like he would anybody else."

Philip had a slight setback when the Newberrys first returned to Brazil. He fractured a leg while kicking a soccer ball with his father.

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He still was wearing a cast when the Newberrys transferred from Sao Paulo to Recife so that Newberry could teach in Baptist Theological Seminary. The preschool administrator would not allow Philip to enroll in the school at first. She assumed meningitis had caused brain damage and Philip would be too uncoordinated to function well and wouldn't fit in because he didn't speak Portuguese.

But when she learned he'd been playing soccer and found him to be outgoing, she was willing to give him a try.

"She wanted to give Philip the chance to prove that he could function with other children in a regular school situation," Mrs. Newberry says. "She also wanted her students to realize that just because someone is different, he is no less a person -- that someone with physical difficulties can still lead a normal life."

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'Year of the Laity' To Involve  
More Baptists In Lay Evangelism

By Joe Westbury

F - HMB

Baptist Press  
2/4/88

ATLANTA (BP)--In the wake of the largest drop in baptisms in nearly a decade, Southern Baptist laypeople are gearing up for a year of personal evangelism that could produce a record harvest of new Christians.

The 1987-88 church year, which began in October, has been designated the "Year of the Laity in Evangelism and Discipleship." Denominational leaders say it is not coming too soon.

A cooperative effort of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board's evangelism section, the Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission and the church training department of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board, the denominational emphasis is designed to train a record number of Southern Baptists for evangelistic witnessing.

"This year could very well result in a banner year for baptisms throughout the Southern Baptist Convention," said Doyle Pennington, lay renewal liaison for the denomination's Home and Foreign Mission boards and the Brotherhood Commission.

"Our highest year for baptisms was 1972, when lay evangelism schools were first launched. A total of 17,000 churches participated. That was the year the SBC registered 429,000 baptisms as laypeople began sharing their faith."

Pennington said he hopes the 1972 baptism record will be surpassed as an estimated 20,000 churches participate in lay evangelism schools and lay renewal weekend emphases. The schools are administered by the personal evangelism department of the Home Mission Board.

The emphasis could not come at a more critical time, denominational leaders agreed. SBC baptisms for 1987 are estimated to have plummeted to their lowest level in nearly a decade, with 344,000 conversions. The 5 percent drop from the previous year represents a net loss of 19,000 baptisms from 1986.

Reversing such a decline will depend on Southern Baptists such as Herman and Ruth Lackey of Midwest City, Okla., Pennington said. The couple represent thousands of individuals who travel the nation on weekends to share their faith through lay renewal.

Such a growing commitment among laity to share their spiritual struggles is what will make the coming months a turning point for many Southern Baptists, Lackey said.

"What we're trying to do with the 'Year of the Laity' is to capture the enthusiasm released through a lay renewal weekend and channel that into lay evangelism training. This gives local church people an opportunity to be trained in sharing their testimony with their friends and relatives in their workplace," Lackey explained.

More individuals such as the Lackeys are expected to begin sharing their faith this year as they participate in lay evangelism schools sponsored by their churches. The Lackeys, who have been volunteers in the denomination's lay movement for 13 years, are part of a growing number of Southern Baptists who are helping others become more adept at witnessing.

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A witness training weekend such as those led by the Lackeys utilizes small-group meetings in which church members focus on their relationship to Christ, the church and other church members. It is not designed as an evangelistic emphasis, although conversion experiences may occur, said Douglas Beggs of the Brotherhood Commission.

"The purpose of the weekend is to help church members explore their needs and relationships to Christ and others. Participants learn how to share a personal testimony, how to witness using a marked New Testament or tract, how to make a witnessing visit and how to conduct immediate and long-range follow-up with a new Christian," Beggs added.

Pennington, who helps plan some of the 400 lay renewal weekends each year, agreed: "Renewal is designed for one purpose only: to build the spiritual foundation in the life of the church. Out of that foundation comes a basis for ministry, evangelism and an individual's recognition that his profession is his mission field, his marketplace where he can share his faith."

Avery Willis, manager of leadership development for the Sunday School Board, is optimistic about the increase in participation in lay renewal and evangelism. Willis manages the Lay Institute for Equipping, four of whose courses -- MasterLife, PrayerLife, MasterDesign and DecisionTime Commitment Counseling -- are recommended for study during the Year of the Laity.

"The purpose of the discipleship training part of the Year of the Laity is to call laity to disciplined and redemptive ministry in the world," Willis said. "If we can call, commission and release the laity to do what God is equipping them to do, we will have the greatest awakening in our time -- possibly a second reformation.

"The reformation gave the Bible to the laity; if we can give an awakened laity to the world, we will have completed what God had in mind when he launched the reformation."

Spiritual renewal and witnessing during the Year of the Laity also is designed to benefit. Southern Baptist's emphasis in 1990 on Scripture distribution and national simultaneous revivals.

Bobby Sunderland, director of the Home Mission Board's direct evangelism department, said the emphasis "will prepare the hearts of people across the country for the theme of the 1990 revivals, 'Here's Hope: Jesus Cares for You.'"

State Baptist conventions already have set dates for their participation in the revivals, which are slated for the spring of 1990. In 1986 when the denomination last conducted mass revivals, baptism totals for the year jumped 4 percent, or 13,000, reversing a four-year decline.

A total of 105,000 conversions were registered in the 1986 "Good News America" revivals, Sunderland noted.

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Mississippi Baptists  
Reach \$40 Million Goal

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(MISS.)

Baptist Press  
2/4/88

JACKSON, Miss. (BP)--Mississippi Baptists have completed a \$40 million campaign to endow their three Baptist colleges and their child-care agency.

Campaign Chairman Harry Vickery of Greenville told a banquet crowd in Jackson a total of \$40 million in gifts and pledges have been obtained in the four-year campaign.

The funds will go to Mississippi College, Blue Mountain College, William Carey College and the Baptist Children's Village. Income from the endowment will go to such causes as teacher salaries, property improvements and scholarships. The Mississippi Baptist Foundation will handle investments.

Vickery noted the campaign goal does not include a \$500,000 gift pledged by a Mississippi church in January, a pledge of \$25,000 made by a man the day of the banquet.

At the beginning of the campaign in 1984, the four institutions had less than \$10 million in endowment among them. The endowment campaign quintupled that.

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Gov. Ray Mabus told the banquet crowd: "Don't stop here. Keep going. Help spread the word of Christ, of morality, of learning throughout this state, this nation and around the world."

Advisers to the campaign organizers had suggested a goal of \$24 million would be the tops for such a program. Architects of the campaign such as Earl Kelly, executive director of the Mississippi Baptist Convention, and Joe Tuten, pastor of Calvary Baptist Church in Jackson, believed in the \$40 million possibility, and that goal was set.

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CORRECTION: Please change the 3rd graf of the 2/3/88 Baptist Press story titled "Missouri Baptist Children's Home To Begin Crisis Pregnancy Center" to read:

When the center opens, it will be one of the first crisis pregnancy facilities in the Southern Baptist Convention to be sponsored by a state convention entity or local Baptist association.

Thanks,  
Baptist Press

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Missouri Baptist Home Helps  
Pioneer 'Validation Therapy'

By Brenda Sanders

F.L.O.  
(MO.)  
Baptist Press  
2/4/88

IRONTON, Mo. (BP)--The elderly woman was admitted to the Baptist nursing home in Ironton, Mo., four years ago. When she arrived, she was disoriented. She didn't talk, walk or feed herself. She sat with her head held low, and when people tried to communicate with her, she merely peered up at them over the rim of her glasses.

Today, the same woman is living a different life. She is much more animated and has talked with the Baptist home staff about her past. She walks about and feeds herself and is physically and emotionally healthier than she was four years ago.

Validation therapy brought about the change in this woman's condition.

Validation is a practice that helps disoriented elderly people reduce stress and enhance dignity and happiness. It is a way of communicating with old people who have retreated from reality by "going back" in their minds to a time when they felt important and productive.

Validation brings a sense of contentment to disoriented old people, said Joy Goodwin, social service director at the Baptist home. The therapy helps them feel life is more meaningful, which gives them incentive to be more communicative and mobile.

The Baptist home staff began using validation therapy about seven years ago and the practice has become an important part of the care for disoriented residents, said Executive Director Edward C. Goodwin.

Changes for elderly people age 75 and up are particularly traumatic, he noted: "They have suffered many losses -- their body has aged, their sight has dimmed, their hearing has diminished. Many times they have outlived family, and the ultimate loss of their home -- as they move into a nursing facility -- causes them to lose the last vestiges of hope."

In dealing with their sense of loss, Goodwin said, many elderly people deny their current circumstances and fantasize about their past. They retreat to happier times when they felt needed and loved.

Disoriented elderly people may go through several stages of regression, Goodwin continued. Stage one is typified by mild confusion in which the elderly person may forget names or what was served for breakfast but may vividly recall events from the past.

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Stage two involves time confusion; the elderly person may not be sure of the time of day and loses track of the days of the week.

In stage three, the old person usually is unable to walk and is confined to a bed or wheelchair, yet is in perpetual motion. Tapping one's fingers, swaying back and forth or singing repeatedly are some examples of things a person might do in this stage of disorientation.

A person in stage four usually is bedfast and will not respond to any stimulation.

Validation therapy, which affirms and soothes disoriented old people, was developed gradually over a number of years by Naomi Feil, a social worker in Cleveland.

Feil discovered confronting disoriented elderly people with reality only caused them to withdraw and become more confused: "I tried all kinds of different things, all with the thought of trying to change the person. The more I tried to orient them to present reality, the worse our relationship got, the less they would talk to me."

As a result, Feil began to take a different approach to communicating with disoriented old people. Instead of arguing with them and reminding them of reality, she began to validate their feelings and thoughts. "Validation involves looking at the whole person and the way they lived their life," she said. "It's a form of communication that accepts the person where they are."

For example, Feil said, "Let's say your 90-year-old mother looks off into the distance and says, 'I see my mother coming to meet me.'"

"You don't tell her, 'Look, you're 90 years old, and your mother has been dead for a long time.'"

"Instead, you validate what she is seeing in her mind's eye. You ask her questions like, 'What does your mother look like? What is she wearing? Do you want to talk to her? What do you want to say?'"

"You never lie to her. You never say, 'Yes, I see your mother coming, too.' Yet you never tell her she's wrong or crazy."

This validation of disoriented people's feelings helps them realize their caregiver is someone they can trust and talk to, someone who cares about what they are experiencing.

"After a time, the disoriented person begins to feel better about herself. She knows you will listen to her and will have empathy for her," Feil pointed out.

Although the goal of validation therapy is not to cure disoriented elderly people, Feil said, it prevents them from withdrawing further into a fantasy world of the past. And often some sense of reality can be restored.

This comes about because the elderly realize it is not necessary to retreat into their past to feel important and valuable, Feil said. Their caregivers make them feel important, and that makes life seem more worthwhile.

With validation therapy, people become more lucid and more talkative, their muscles relax and their breathing becomes more even, she said: "It keeps them interacting with other people and helps them function better. It makes them feel better about wherever they are."

No specific research has yet been conducted on validation therapy, Feil said, asserting research would substantiate her observations, since "there are behavioral indicators, such as people becoming more physically active."

"It needs to be researched," she said. "That is our goal now."

Goodwin was instructed in the use of validation therapy by Feil at the Validation Training Institute in Cleveland, a non-profit public institution.

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Goodwin is a certified validation therapist who is qualified to teach the practice to others. She constantly promotes the use of validation therapy at the Baptist home. The social services and activities staff at the Missouri Baptist Convention-related institution use it most often.

"I believe we are seeing less disorientation and are even seeing people living longer as a result of validation," Goodwin said. "We start working with people as soon as they enter the home and have seen fewer people regress once they've been admitted here."

Goodwin said she would like to see more people become aware of the method: "I think it would be the kind of thing that individual Baptist churches could become involved in. Anyone can do validation therapy. It just takes a caring person who is willing to listen and empathize with the elderly.

"Validation therapy ... is the ultimate kindness -- to be accepted wherever you are."