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Counselors field questions
during BTN teleconference

By Terri Lackey

N-SSB

NASHVILLE (BP)--Pastors who counsel families were urged during a recent live BTN teleconference to develop a network of fellow Christian counselors to turn to for help if caseloads become too heavy or a problem too complex.

"Even as a professional, I have to know when I am in over my head and I need to refer" people to other counselors, said Roberta Damon, minister of counseling at First Baptist Church of Richmond, Va., in answer to a call-in question from the viewing audience.

Damon was one of three panelists who appeared on "Counseling Families," a live teleconference for pastors, pastoral counselors and church leaders who counsel families. The teleconference, which aired April 21 on the Baptist Telecommunication Network, was sponsored by the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board's family ministry and church administration departments and the Southern Baptist Association of Family Ministers.

Panelists included Damon, Ron Mumbower, minister of counseling at First Baptist Church of Jackson, Miss., and Jim Hightower, pastoral care consultant in the board's church administration department. Gary Hauk, manager of the family ministry department's family enrichment section, was host.

Call-in questions about when it is proper to refer people to professionals, AIDS, using the Bible in counseling and advantages of premarital and postmarital counseling were received during the hour-long program.

Meanwhile, Damon suggested Christian counselors get to know other Christian counselors in the community "who can be of help to you when you need it."

"We should have a Rolodex on our desks of names of people who deal in certain areas, like suicide, runaways or abortion," she said.

Hightower said: "Most of us have a sense of when we are feeling uncomfortable and when we are obviously over our heads. We realize it is time to act not as a minister of counseling but as a minister of introduction and introduce these people to a professional."

Answering a question about using the Bible in counseling, Mumbower said Christian counselors should not only use the Bible but act out its truths in their daily lifestyle.

"The Bible is a guidebook we all can use as pastors and laypeople. It shows a person love and acceptance," he said.

Research shows most church members in a crisis situation "turn to the church first before they go to a professional," he added.

Michael Hester, associate professor of Christian family ministry at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., and a member of the studio audience, answered a caller's questions about counseling AIDS patients when panel members said they had not counseled anyone with AIDS.

"You have to help that person get ready for the process of dying," Hester said. "It can be spiritually uplifting for this person to talk about what it means to live until he dies and what it means to die."

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The person wants to enroll in a support group with others who have AIDS, and the patient's family and fellow church members need help in understanding what it means to die of AIDS, he said.

On premarital counseling, Mumbower said the couple should get to know each other's family histories and learn how each family gives and receives love, settles disputes or communicates, "because that is likely how the partner coming from that family will act."

Mumbower recommended four to six sessions of premarital counseling with about two weeks between each session.

"The earlier you can start counseling, the earlier you can catch and work on any problems which might come up after the wedding," he said.

In a closing statement, Damon said she would like to "dispel the myth that anybody who goes to a counselor is crazy, can't handle things or is in dreadful trauma."

"Counseling should be looked on as good for our souls and good for our health," she said. "We need to remove the stigma placed on it."

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Evangelical/Baptist
relationship discussed

N- CO
(SBTS)

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LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--Southern Baptists and American evangelicals have "fundamentally different ways of putting their faith to work" that have contributed to tensions and misunderstandings between the two groups, a scholar on evangelicals said.

"Evangelicals find it hard to believe that individuals and congregations would virtually restrict their participation in Christian witness to one jumbo denomination and its agencies," Joel Carpenter, director of the Institute for the Study of American Evangelicals at Wheaton (Ill.) College, said in an address at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky.

On the other hand, Carpenter said, Southern Baptists "have found it hard to believe that the pan-evangelical coalition really amounts to much when its efforts are so fragmented and diversified."

Carpenter was one of four lecturers during Southern seminary's Denominational Heritage Week. The special emphasis on "Southern Baptists and American Evangelicals" was funded by a grant from Pew Charitable Trusts in Philadelphia.

While Carpenter said Southern Baptists belong to the "classic" evangelical tradition, he noted Southern Baptists have been hesitant to join the "diverse transdenominational movement or coalition that has arisen since World War II."

This group has performed its ministries through para-church agencies such as Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship, Christianity Today magazine, World Vision, Campus Crusade for Christ, Moody Bible Institute, Wheaton College, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, the 700 Club and the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, he said.

In addition to different methods for funding ministries, evangelicals and Southern Baptists have different cultural backgrounds, Carpenter stressed. Southern Baptists have roots in a region that was pervaded by evangelical Christianity, while evangelicals have "inhabited a pluralistic world where religion's public place has been progressively restricted," he explained.

However, dramatic changes in Southern culture have caused the Southern Baptist Convention since the 1950s to be "rocked by controversy" over social responsibility and religious authority, he added.

As cultural pluralism intensifies the SBC may "become a pluralistic holding company for special-interest agencies that reflect a variety of interests and persuasion," he said.

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If its current controversy continues and the SBC does not adjust its structures to accommodate the diversity within the denomination, Southern Baptists will "probably continue to create para-church agencies, both on the right and the left," he said. Therefore, Southern Baptists' ways of doing ministry may begin to resemble methods used by evangelicals.

In another address, John P. Newport, vice president for academic affairs and provost at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, said Southern Baptists are in general agreement with most evangelical doctrines.

For instance, many Southern Baptists would agree with a "carefully nuanced" definition of biblical inerrancy, he said. The six inerrantist scholars at the 1987 Ridgecrest Conference on Biblical Inerrancy "directly or indirectly said that most Southern Baptist moderate-conservatives belong under the umbrella of a nuanced inerrancy," he added.

However, most leaders of the current conservative movement among Southern Baptists embrace the strict definition of inerrancy championed by Harold Lindsell, author of the 1976 book "Battle for the Bible," he said.

Southern Baptists' history and denominational posture set them apart from non-denominational evangelicals, said Newport, noting that Southern Baptists should be identified as "denominational evangelicals."

Doctrines such as believer's baptism, congregational polity, denominational cooperation, religious freedom and church-state separation "continue to be major concerns" for Baptists, he said. But a person can accept a state church, a hierarchical church government and infant baptism and still be called an evangelical, he added.

Another lecturer, George Marsden, professor of church history at Duke University Divinity School in Durham, N.C., said a "common evangelical movement" has many "disconnected branches." Therefore, he said, Southern Baptists can appropriately be labeled evangelicals.

Marsden cited, however, a narrower definition of "evangelical." People in this group are "card-carrying evangelicals" who tend to have greater loyalty to evangelicalism than to their denomination, he said.

While Billy Graham and Lindsell are Southern Baptists their "real allegiance is to a broader evangelical movement," he noted.

The week's concluding lecturer, Richard J. Mouw, professor of Christian philosophy and ethics at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, Calif., emphasized the need for increased dialogue between evangelicals and Southern Baptists on social and ethical issues.

Evangelicals are involved in an "extensive exploration of traditions of ethical discourse," because evangelicals in the 20th century have "been a deprived community when it comes to thinking theologically about the issues of ethical life," Mouw said.

Baptists also are looking toward various traditions of ethical thinking in quest of an appropriate response to social issues, he said, noting Baptists are studying traditions that range from Roger Williams and the early American Baptists to Puritan Reconstructionism.

Evangelicals "desperately need" dialogue with Southern Baptists Mouw said. After watching the SBC controversy, he believes that Southern Baptists need dialogue with evangelicals, he added.

Such discussions are necessary, Mouw said, to help both groups try to "get out of the polarization that so easily sets upon us."

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Win America's cities with
compassion, speakers say

By Mark Wingfield

N-HMB

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DETROIT (BP)--If Southern Baptists are to win America's cities for Christ, they must provide compassionate ministry, four urban experts said.

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"What is the city to us? Is it a spiritual toxic waste dump or is it a challenge for ministry?" asked Carlos Leslie, pastor of First Spanish Baptist Church in Detroit.

"All of the problems of the city are the reasons the church ought to be there," explained Leslie, speaking at a Southern Baptist Home Mission Board conference on metropolitan ministry.

Leslie and other speakers suggested that addressing human needs, however unpleasant, is the biblical model for evangelizing urban areas.

"If we're going to do urban ministry, we're going to have to forget our need for status and find the people who don't seem to fit but need Jesus Christ," added Larry McSwain, dean of the school of theology at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky.

"The focus of the church of Jesus Christ is on the resourceless. If we will be faithful to that calling, God will somehow provide the resources."

Jim Queen, pastor of Uptown Baptist Church in Chicago, spoke to the same theme, noting the scriptural account that Jesus "went about preaching, teaching and healing."

"We do a good job of preaching and teaching, but we don't do a good job of healing," Queen said. "I think compassionate ministries are healing."

Queen cited health, education, jobs and housing as needs the church should meet with compassion in cities.

"In our day, the church needs to get back its credibility," he said. "The way we do that is through the compassionate ministries."

Kennon Callahan, a church-growth consultant, explained that the lack of compassionate ministries is destroying America's churches. He suggested churches should address the unchurched with themes of compassion and community rather than of challenge and commitment.

Pastors and church leaders usually challenge people for commitment without addressing ministry needs. This creates a gap between church leadership and the people in the pew, who are longing for compassion, he said.

"You will not build a church in an urban area on the motivation of commitment," Callahan said. "The New Testament doesn't say we're committed to Jesus because he was first committed to us. Instead, we love Jesus because he first loved us."

Queen added, "The real preaching comes when you're involved in a compassionate ministry out of the overflow of your heart."

Compassionate ministries in the cities require networking to learn and to build bridges, the speakers said.

Leslie suggested urban pastors should visit unchurched community leaders to ask what needs they think a church should address. "Sit back, shut up, listen and learn," he said. "If I'm in the city, I've got to learn to think like people in the city."

McSwain agreed: "I'm convinced that one of the reasons we're less successful in the urban environment is that we try to do it without support. We can't do ministry in the city alone."

The conference, "Models for Metropolitan Ministry," is one of six similar events scheduled across the United States this spring. The conferences are sponsored jointly by the Home Mission Board, the six Southern Baptist seminaries, targeted state conventions and Baptist associations.

Free laity to the
cities, Tillapaugh says

By Mark Wingfield

N- HMB

DETROIT (BP)--Southern Baptists should take a lesson from para-church organizations and free the laypeople to evangelize America's cities, a metropolitan pastor said.

Frank Tillapaugh, pastor of Bear Valley Baptist Church in Denver, spoke to 120 urban pastors, missionaries and laypeople in a Southern Baptist Home Mission Board conference on metropolitan ministry.

"In the last reformation, we gave the Bible back to the people," he said. "Now we need a second reformation to give the ministry back to the people. The secret to winning this country is for laypeople to carve out three or four hours every week for ministry.

"There is tremendous potential in the pews. But the people in the pews are convinced they aren't qualified to be ministers."

Tillapaugh, who was converted through the ministry of a para-church group, said rigid church structures have forced laypeople to seek creative ministry outlets outside the church.

"The church has taken a 'y'all come' attitude toward the lost, but the para-church organizations have said, 'We're coming after you,'" he explained. "The para-church organizations are the fishers of men, and the churches are the keepers of the aquarium."

Churches must change their mindset and begin to think for themselves rather than just carry out established programs, he said: "We're going to have to radically change our mindset about how we do church. The message is absolute; we are not free to fool around with the message. But we are free to change the methodology.

"One of the terrible commentaries on Southern Baptist churches is that they are all alike. There is no methodology for the church given in the New Testament. We don't know if they had Royal Ambassadors in Macedonia."

Southern Baptists do well with Scripture, holy living and prayer but don't know how to think, Tillapaugh said. As a result, churches remain event-oriented while para-church groups have become strategy-oriented thinkers.

"We keep running the same events whether they work or not," he noted. "You can go into a Southern Baptist church and preach heresy and get away with it faster than you can change the Sunday evening service. We've baptized the wrong thing."

The essential internal programs of the church should be led by professional staff members who will encourage laity to perform various volunteer marketplace ministries, he said.

"We're going to have to raise up a generation that is able to do evangelism in space, evangelism under the ocean, evangelism in diverse situations," he predicted.

"We are poised to take every sector of this culture for Christ. We've got the people and the places, but we don't have the mindset."

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Churches should equip students
to take Christ to the world

By Frank Wm. White

N- SSB

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NASHVILLE (BP)--Southern Baptist churches that are failing to equip college students for witnessing and ministry may be missing one of their best opportunities to train a missionary force, the leader of Southern Baptist student ministry told a group of pastors.

Charles Johnson, director of the student ministry department at the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board, told participants attending a conference on preaching to college students that students will be scattered throughout the world and can be missionaries if they are trained by their churches.

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To see the potential impact of college students, church leaders need only to mark a map showing where college students who have been in their church in the last five years are located now.

"All segments of the congregation are important and should be trained in witnessing and ministry, but students will be in the church for only a few years before they go elsewhere for more education or to begin their careers," Johnson pointed out.

Students can be trained through effective Sunday school programs and with specialized programs such as the Share seminar, a student ministry department witness training session designed for college students and student leaders, Johnson said.

"Too often churches focus special attention on students who plan to attend seminary. All students need the attention and special training to be witnesses, not just those who plan full-time ministry roles," Johnson said.

Charlie Baker, pastor of Southern Hills Baptist Church in Tulsa, Okla., and a frequent speaker to student groups, said preaching that relates to life where students are, not where the pastor wants them to be, will be most effective.

"The uniqueness of preaching is its basis in the Bible. Preachers should not abandon that in their efforts to reach students or anyone else," said Baker.

To reach college students, preaching should be creative without going outside the expectations of the traditionalists in the congregation. Some congregations will be more flexible in allowing deviation from tradition than others, Baker pointed out.

The struggle to reach college students without alienating the rest of the congregation is caused by the different lifestyles represented by college students and older Southern Baptists, said Ircel Harrison, director of student ministry for the Tennessee Baptist Convention.

College students generally are achievers, "I-am-me" and experiential sociological types, he explained. A large number of Southern Baptists are classified as belongers, an outer-directed social group much different from the inner-directed groups associated with college students.

"The church must decide whether it is developing a climate for belongers only or an open congregation that will reach wide-ranging types of people," Harrison said.

When a church adjusts its style to reach college students, it also is more likely to reach median adults of the baby boom generation, he said.

Baker noted preaching that meets the needs of college students does not have to ignore other segments of the congregation.

"Loneliness hurts for college students just as it does for senior adults," he said.

Sermon illustrations should take in the spectrum of individuals so all identify with something, Baker said.