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-- BAPTIST PRESS
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December 29, 1992

92-215

WASHINGTON -- Make alcohol battle a priority, CLC, others ask Clinton nominee.
NASHVILLE -- New SBC money management materials to be released.
MIAMI -- Post-hurricane emotional needs getting attention in Florida; photo
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Make alcohol battle a priority,
CLC, others ask Clinton nominee

By Tom Strode

Baptist Press
12/29/92

WASHINGTON (BP)--The Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission has joined seven other organizations in asking the newly appointed secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services to make the prevention of alcohol problems one of the top issues on her agenda.

In a Dec. 22 letter, the organizations asked Donna Shalala to endorse warning messages in alcohol advertising and increases in alcohol excise taxes. Shalala, chancellor of the University of Wisconsin, was appointed recently to the cabinet position by President-elect Bill Clinton.

"We have pledged to work with the incoming administration when we are in agreement, and we hope that the new secretary will be sympathetic to our concerns related to alcohol issues," said James A. Smith, the Christian Life Commission's director of government relations.

The letter, written by representatives of Center for Science in the Public Interest and the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, was endorsed not only by the CLC but by the American Medical Association, American Academy of Family Physicians, American Home Economics Association, National Association of Alcoholism and Drug Abuse Counselors and National Coalition to Prevent Impaired Driving.

All except the AMA have representatives on the steering committee of the Coalition for the Prevention of Alcohol Problems. The CLC's Smith serves on the committee.

One of the coalition's chief aims is the passage of legislation requiring health and safety warnings in all print and broadcast alcohol advertisements. Vice President-elect Al Gore was the lead Democratic sponsor of the Senate bill.

"We also believe that steep increases in alcohol excise taxes, as were recommended by the Surgeon General's Workshop on Drunk Driving, are an important prevention strategy," the letter said. "New revenues can be used to fund further prevention programs as well as alcohol related health care expenses."

HHS' community-based education and prevention programs to combat problems caused by the consumption of alcohol "need to be supported by improved federal alcohol policies," the joint letter said.

In 1988, alcohol cost American society \$85 billion, more than all other drugs combined, the letter said. Alcohol is responsible for more than 100,000 deaths a year, according to the letter.

New SBC money management materials to be released

NASHVILLE (BP)--A simple plan for teaching Christian money management, "Live Wisely," will be released in January by the Southern Baptist Stewardship Commission in a first-ever convention-wide emphasis.

The new emphasis and materials have been in development for two years, according to Lee Davis, money management specialist for the commission.

Materials available include a "How to Conduct a Live Wisely Emphasis" guidebook and "Five Steps to Successful Money Management," a new Broadman Press book.

The guidebook outlines a one-Sunday emphasis supported with preaching helps, devotional, tract and poster.

"What's unique about the guidebook," Davis said, "is its thorough yet simple content." Also included is a teaching outline provided for church leaders who conduct the suggested one-hour training session. Some state convention stewardship offices will have a videotape featuring Davis which can be borrowed for the training session if desired.

The new book is for members participating in the emphasis.

"The book covers every basic element of money management for individuals and families which I've discovered in 13 years of studying and teaching the subject," author Davis said. "I've used the principles successfully myself for all of these years and have given many personal experiences throughout the book."

"The Christian Manager," a money management program, also is available for MS-DOS computers.

Also to be released in January by the Stewardship Commission are:

-- "Give: In Christ's Spirit" theme-related resources. Based on the story of the Good Samaritan, all Southern Baptist churches will receive a new catalog, promoting the 1993 stewardship thematic materials.

-- a new set of color posters and leaflets on tithing. There is a poster and leaflet for every month of the year. "It is one way," John E. Rush, vice president of stewardship development, said, "to help our churches teach the discipline and blessing of tithing throughout the year."

In 1991, Southern Baptists reported more than 15 million members and 1,575,347 tithers, or slightly more than 10 percent of the membership.

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Post-hurricane emotional needs getting attention in Florida

By Chip Alford

Baptist Press
12/29/92

MIAMI (BP)--While teams of Southern Baptist volunteers continue to help rebuild homes and churches destroyed or damaged by Hurricane Andrew, church and denominational leaders also are beginning to provide programs and resources to help south Florida residents put the pieces of their emotional and spiritual lives back together.

It began in early November when the Florida Baptist Convention sponsored a spiritual retreat for pastors and church staff members serving in areas hardest hit by the Aug. 23 hurricane. While only a small number attended, one pastor said it did provide a much-needed "breather" from the hectic pace of reconstruction.

"The retreat was helpful because it helped us focus on the grief process, how to get through it ourselves and help others through it, too," said Charlie Koch, pastor of Cutler Ridge Baptist Church in south Miami. "It was also a chance for spiritual refreshment. With the way things are here now, you do forget that life is normal just a few miles away."

Not long after the storm, Koch started a support group for hurricane victims at his church. Led by a Christian counselor, the meetings attracted a small number of people and lasted only a few weeks.

"But it was helpful because it gave people a chance to vent their feelings and frustrations," Koch said. "I think we may have started it a little too soon, though. People are still very much dealing with the physical aspects of the hurricane -- rebuilding their homes and businesses, looking for work. Some people are still living without electricity."

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The spiritual retreat was just the first step in the Florida Baptist Convention's efforts to help meet the spiritual and emotional needs of hurricane victims. According to state brotherhood director Cecil Seagle, a church and community ministries worker and a Christian counselor are being secured to work through the convention's disaster relief command post in Florida City.

"We hope to have them both working by mid-February," Seagle said, adding the workers likely will travel to different areas damaged by the hurricane to meet, work and counsel with victims.

Churches located in areas that received less damage from the storm also are beginning to help victims deal with the emotional scars left by the tragedy. University Baptist Church in Coral Gables sponsored a workshop in late November to train laypeople in counseling skills to help both themselves and other hurricane victims. According to minister of education David Wideman, the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board provided one of its products -- "WiseCounsel: Skills for Lay Counseling" -- free of charge to participants. The church also will use the materials later this year for training deacons in counseling skills.

Designed for small-group study, WiseCounsel provides a 10-step counseling model that leads participants to learn to listen, guide behavior change and interact appropriately in relationships. It provides guidance for counseling families, youth, singles, senior adults and those who are sick, suicidal or grieving.

One conference participant believes those skills will be vital in the months ahead.

"At this point there is a tremendous need for churches to provide counseling and therapy," said Larry Adams, a retired business executive and deacon at University Baptist Church. "It really makes you feel helpless sometimes because so many have lost their homes, their jobs, their automobiles. So many peoples' lives are in limbo. We have 55 families in our church who lost everything.

"This is really an opportunity for churches to help in an organized way because this is one thing the government can't do -- put your emotional and spiritual life back together."

While providing spiritual and emotional help to hurricane victims is vital, Seagle said the immediate priority remains rebuilding homes and churches.

"We have identified 372 homes damaged or destroyed by the hurricane that are either uninsured or underinsured. If we don't help rebuild them, the people are absolutely going to cave-in under the pressure," he said, adding the emotional health of victims often relates to how far along they are in the rebuilding process.

"It really is like moving through a grief process. Some folks are still very, very angry and are asking 'Why me?' Others are depressed and frustrated from dealing with contractors and insurance companies. There are still huge amounts of devastation here. Those that are making progress are beginning to feel better about things."

Any individuals or church groups interested in helping with the rebuilding should call the convention's disaster relief headquarters at 305-248-7059.

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

EDITORS' NOTE: This story appeared in the (BP) index 12-21 but was omitted among the stories posted that day.

Leavell urges NOTBS grads
not to lose touch with Jesus

By Debbie Moore

Baptist Press
12/29/92

NEW ORLEANS (BP)--"You're facing your future as a graduate of this institution," said Landrum P. Leavell II, seminary president, to 86 graduates during the 75th annual commencement exercises at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

"You're going to be involved with people whom supposedly you are to lead to Jesus. But, friend, when you lose Jesus, you're not going to lead anybody else to him."

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Making a contemporary application of the gospel story of Mary and Joseph losing Jesus in Jerusalem for three days, Leavell said, "Every person in this room who is a Christian has lost Jesus at one time or another for a varying period of days or weeks or months. ... What's lost when we lose Jesus? I don't believe you can lose salvation. ... But I believe we can lose some other things in our relationship to Jesus."

Leavell cautioned the graduates about five ways fellowship, leadership and growth can be lost in a minister's life.

First, these qualities are lost "when we are too preoccupied," he said. Mary and Joseph became too preoccupied with the details of the journey back home to Nazareth to have an immediate concern for Jesus.

"Maybe it is of significance that they lost him at church," he said. "And that, my friend, can happen to you. ... As a God-called man or woman serving Christ in a local church, you can become so preoccupied with the minutia of ministry that you can lose your close, vital relationship ... with the Lord Jesus Christ."

Second, "we also lose Jesus on occasion when we're too tired," Leavell said. Mary and Joseph were probably worn out and anxious to get home as they prepared to leave Jerusalem. "The ministry to which you've been called is exhausting work. Burnout is a specter that looms over you every day. You can reach the point where you just don't have any incentive left. You've given and given, and you don't feel that you have anything left to give. But I want to tell you that this is inevitable when we're severed from the power source."

If Christians do not constantly replenish their reservoir of energy, "then it's inevitable that you're going to run out of gas," he said. "Burnout can come, and it comes when you're tired, when you just don't have any energy left."

Third, "we can lose Jesus sometimes when we're too angry," Leavell said. Some ministers seem to be hostile and looking for a fight, or ministers can get angry at "people who abuse us, who say false things about us, who are organizing to oppose what the church is seeking to do and the direction the church is taking. ... Sometimes we become angry at the ineptitude of people when we trust them to do a certain thing ... and they absolutely bomb out. ... Sometimes we're angry at Satan and his devastation of human life. ...

"But the fact is that anger can leave us prayerless and powerless and out of touch with the Lord Jesus Christ."

Fourth, "we lose Jesus when we're too self-sufficient," he said. "Really there isn't but one reason that we don't stay in vital touch with the Lord, and that one reason ... is that we don't think we need him."

"When you think you need him, you call on him. ... But in your self-sufficiency there will be times when you say ... 'I'd rather do it myself.' You think you can do it, you can handle it, everything's under control. ... Why is it that we can go for hours and days without any vital, close, intimate relationship with Jesus Christ? The reason is that we don't think we need him. But like a glorified spare tire, when the time comes and the problem occurs, we turn to him."

Fifth, "we lose Jesus when we become too distracted. The demands on the time of a God-called minister are infinite. Those demands just pile up one on top of another. There are the demands of your church, of administration, of visitation, of sermon preparation, of preparation for the other things that you've been called of God to do.

"Then there are the demands of the community. ... There are the demands of your local association and your state convention and the Southern Baptist Convention, and you're being pulled in all of these directions every day, and it's easy to become so distracted that you lose Jesus."

"And when that happens, people can't see him in you, and they're not attracted to the kingdom of God. They're diverted from the kingdom of God. Distractions such as these make it hard to find time for Jesus, hard to find time for prayer and for Bible reading, for your own devotional life."

The only protection ministers have against burnout "is that inner support system that you get on your own through prayer and Bible reading," Leavell said.

"Friend, if you've lost him, go back to where you lost him. He's still at the temple. ... Or maybe you lost him in your house, in a conflict between you and your spouse, when you quit reading your Bible and praying. Go back to where you lost him, and when you go back there, you're going to find to your delight that he'll be right there waiting for you."

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James Wesberry, dead at 86,
was Lord's Day Alliance exec

Baptist Press
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ATLANTA (BP)--James P. Wesberry, executive director emeritus of The Lord's Day Alliance of the United States and a former Atlanta pastor, died of lung cancer in his home on Christmas day. He was 86.

Wesberry, recently referred to as a Georgia Baptist patriarch, once dreamed of becoming a United States senator but he ultimately surrendered to the ministry. He was ordained in 1925 in his home church, Park Street Baptist in Columbia, S.C.

He served pastorates in Kingstree and Bamberg, S.C., in his early ministry but he is most widely remembered for his 31 years as pastor of Morningside Baptist Church in Atlanta, 1944 to 1975. His biography, "The Morningside Man," was written in 1975 by James C. Bryant.

From 1975 until February 1992 he served as executive director of the Lord's Day Alliance of the United States, an ecumenical organization devoted to promoting the observance of Sunday as a day of worship. The organization's headquarters are in the Georgia Baptist Center in Atlanta.

During his pastorate at Morningside, Wesberry served as president of the Georgia Baptist Convention, 1956-58, and president of the Southern Baptist Convention Pastor's Conference, 1956. He also served 17 years on the SBC Executive Committee, 1959-1986, one of the longest terms in SBC history.

Former Georgia Gov. Herman Talmadge named him chairman of the Georgia Literature Commission, created in 1951 to fight pornography in Georgia. He served on the panel 21 years. He was the author of 10 books, including "The Lord's Day," published in 1986.

Wesberry received a bachelor's degree from Mercer University and a master's of theology from Andover-Newton Theological Seminary. He also holds several honorary doctorates.

Wesberry is survived by his wife, Margaret Spratlin Wesberry; a son, James P. Wesberry Jr., of Washington, D.C.; seven grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

The funeral was held Dec. 28 at Morningside Baptist Church in Atlanta. Graveside services were at Elmwood Cemetery in Columbia, S.C.

Memorials may be made to the Lord's Day Alliance of the United States or the Wesberry Scholarship Fund through the Georgia Baptist Foundation.

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