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92-109

**Bush comments on homosexuals
in cabinet 'outrage' CLC's Land** By Tom Strode

WASHINGTON (BP)--The head of the Southern Baptist Convention's ethics agency has written George Bush expressing "outrage" and a "sense of betrayal" concerning the president's recent comments he would not have a "litmus test" on homosexuals serving in his cabinet.

In a July 1 letter, Richard D. Land, executive director of the Christian Life Commission, responded to the president's statement June 26 on ABC News' "20/20" when asked if he would "knowingly have a homosexual in your cabinet or appoint a homosexual to your cabinet."

"We have no litmus test on that question here and there aren't going to be any," Bush said. "And I would say, 'How do I know?'"

He continues to support the ban on homosexuals serving in the United States military, however, the president said.

"While we appreciate your support for continuing the ban on homosexuals in the military," Land said in his letter, "we are incredulous that anyone who claims to support the traditional family values agenda could possibly suggest that there should be 'no litmus test' for important positions within your administration.

"Some have suggested that evangelicals should seek a meeting with you on this matter. The question of support for homosexual rights within your administration has prompted two previous meetings. In light of this recent incident, these meetings seem to have made little difference," Land wrote.

"The time for meetings is past. It is time for action. For the third time, we are requesting that you issue the executive order affirming the traditional family.

"Actions speak louder than words," Land wrote. "We await your answer."

President Bush had not responded to the letter as of July 8.

Homosexual rights was a focus of meetings Land and other evangelical leaders had with the president in October 1990 and April of this year. At both meetings, evangelicals requested the executive order supporting the traditional family. The order, which would govern administration policies, specifically opposes homosexual rights.

After the April meeting, Land and then Southern Baptist Convention President Morris Chapman said Bush signaled he was opposed to the homosexual rights agenda. The president indicated he did not support "domestic partners" legislation, Land said after the meeting. "Domestic partners" laws and ordinances give homosexual couples benefits normally reserved for a husband and wife.

During the "20/20" interview, the following exchange took place between ABC's Barbara Walters and the president:

WALTERS: "In a sense of fairness, I must ask you the same question that I asked Ross Perot, which was, would you knowingly have a homosexual in your cabinet or appoint a homosexual to your cabinet?"

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BUSH: "We have no litmus test on that question here and there aren't going to be any. And I would say, 'How do I know?' And secondly, I say I do support our policy in the military. And I will continue to support it --"

WALTERS: "Banning homosexuals."

BUSH: "Yes, I will continue to support it. It's been that way through history and I accept the recommendation of the professionals that make that recommendation to the president."

WALTERS: "A lot of good people are getting thrown out."

BUSH: "I support our policy on that and everyone knows my adherence to traditional family values. I might say that's the case. But there are no litmus tests on this question here."

In response to a similar question from Walters on "20/20" in May, independent presidential candidate Ross Perot seemed to indicate he would not favor naming a homosexual to his cabinet and to support the military ban on homosexuals.

Since then, Perot has been sending different signals. Perot told TV Guide in an interview he "wasn't moralizing" on "20/20" and the reason he said he would not favor appointing a homosexual is because he would not want to put a person through partisan confirmation hearings. He has never had a policy prohibiting the hiring of homosexuals in his business, Perot said. In the interview, he complimented those homosexuals who have worked for him.

Perot has had two meetings with homosexual rights activists since mid-June, The Washington Post reported July 8. Participants in the second meeting said Perot indicated he would release a statement condemning discrimination against homosexuals, the Post reported. The extent of his expected statement was not known.

TV Guide reported Democratic candidate Bill Clinton has said he will hire without regard to whether a person is homosexual. The Clinton campaign could not confirm this at press time. Clinton also has said he will overturn the prohibition on homosexuals in the military.

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Christian health program
promotes total fitness

By Linda Lawson

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GLORIETA, N.M. (BP)--Lifelong lifestyle change -- not short-term quick fixes -- result in losing weight and keeping the pounds off, according to two leaders of a Christian health program.

"It has taken me since 1981 to change a lot of my attitudes about food," said Carole Lewis, national director of "First Place: A Christ-Centered Health Program" begun 11 years ago by First Baptist Church of Houston. Today, more than 1,000 churches in 35 states are using the program.

Lewis and Kay Smith, a First Place group leader from Roscoe, Texas, introduced the program July 4-10 during the Discipleship Training Leadership Conference at Glorieta (N.M.) Baptist Conference Center. Materials for leading First Place support groups in churches are being released this summer in a cooperative venture between First Baptist, Houston, and the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board.

Lewis described First Place as a spiritually based education program to teach participants to eat right, exercise and get enough rest.

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"I am convinced that in God's Word is everything we need for health," said Lewis, who enrolled in the first group conducted by the church. Her goal was to lose 20 pounds, pounds she had lost and gained numerous times in previous attempts.

"This is a plan to make people into balanced Christians. It's a wonderful way to live when Jesus Christ is in control. That's what we learn in First Place," Lewis said.

First Place participants enroll in 13-week group sessions that include weigh-ins, food facts, Scripture memorization, Bible study and prayer. Using a food exchange program, optimum weight loss is one and one-half to two pounds per week. People are encouraged to stay in the program at least one quarter after they reach their goal.

In addition to Bible study and prayer, another unique feature of First Place is group leaders and assistants maintain close personal contact with members, including calling them when they miss meetings. Personal needs of members become prayer concerns of the group.

The First Place diet is low in fat and high in protein. Members are encouraged to eat fresh meat, fruit and vegetables rather than highly processed foods.

At present, 500 people are enrolled in 20 First Place groups conducted by First Baptist in Houston. They meet at times convenient to participants. One group of business people convenes at 6:15 a.m. Approximately 250 of the current participants are not affiliated with the church.

"This can be a tremendous outreach program because people are interested in losing weight," Lewis said. In the process, many First Place participants have become Christians.

Smith, a self-described compulsive eater who has lost 100 pounds through First Place, said the program not only revolutionizes the lives of individuals but also of families and churches.

At social events in churches with First Place groups, refreshments begin to include not only fattening desserts but also fruit, raw vegetables and desserts from the First Place cookbook.

"Every person can learn all they need to know about nutrition," Smith said. "If you're completely off sugar, fruits and vegetables will taste much better."

The average American consumes 140 pounds of sugar per year, Smith said. For example, a non-diet soft drink will have 12-14 teaspoons of sugar, one piece of chocolate cake will have at least 12 teaspoons of sugar and one piece of angel food cake has more than seven.

While First Place began primarily as a weight-loss program, many current participants do not need to lose weight but to maintain a healthy diet due to diabetes, hypoglycemia or high cholesterol.

To lead a First Place group, Lewis recommends laypersons who have suffered weight problems themselves.

"Sometimes if you don't have a weight problem you don't understand the person who binges," she said.

Leaders must love people and be maintaining or losing weight, Lewis advised, adding any leader who starts to gain weight should step aside and become a group member.

At least one assistant is needed for each class. Assistants weight in group members, listen to their memory verses, check their fact sheets and help with telephone calls.

The new First Place materials, part of the new LifeWay line of support group resources, include four 13-week Bible studies -- Giving God First Place, Life That Wins, Life Under Control and Everyday Victory for Everyday People.

A leader's guide, member's notebook, cookbook and a videotape also are available from the board.

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Churches must address
today's dysfunctions

By Linda Lawson

Baptist Press
7/8/92

GLORIETA, N.M. (BP)--If Southern Baptist churches hope to be relevant to needs of their members and people in their communities, they must address abuse, alcoholism, workaholicism, divorce, eating disorders, codependency and many other dysfunctions common in today's society.

"In the jaded world we live in, I'm afraid we're not seeing people as Jesus saw them," Roy Edgemon, director of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board's discipleship training department told a group of pastors attending the July 4-10 Discipleship Training Leadership Conference at Glorieta (N.M.) Baptist Conference Center. "Jesus saw people. He didn't see them as units of service -- barbers, mechanics, shop owners. He saw the individual."

He cited statistics to illustrate the multitudes of Americans struggling to survive day by day. For example, one in three girls and one in four boys will be sexually abused by age 18. Suicide is the third-highest killer of teen-agers. Incest touches one in five Americans. Eleven million Americans are alcoholics and their addiction impacts 26 million family members. Baby boomers are 10 times more likely than their parents to be treated for depression. One in four children lives in a single-parent home.

During the week-long conference, discipleship training department personnel conducted national training launches for the first materials produced by the department for churches to use with support groups. Under the imprint of LifeWay, "Search for Significance," a course on self-esteem developed in cooperation with Rapha, a Houston-based in-hospital program for treatment of psychiatric and substance abuse problems, will be released this summer. "Making Peace With Your Past" for dysfunctional families will be available in October and "First Place: A Christ-Centered Health Program" produced cooperatively with First Baptist Church of Houston has just been released.

Church members represent the first focus for support groups in churches, Edgemon told Baptist Press. However, churches also should reach out to their communities to help people identify their dysfunctions and move beyond them.

"This can help revitalize churches into looking at their role and mission in the community," he said.

Edgemon noted government and social service agencies have been quicker than churches to meet needs caused by abuse, addictions and other dysfunctions. He cited three discipleship training department youth workers who attended a recent national conference on support groups for youth and were the only representatives from a church body.

"Jesus talked more about kingdom business than any other subject in the New Testament," Edgemon said. "Churches must do kingdom work in their communities."

Tim Sledge, pastor of Kingsland Baptist Church in Katy, Texas, and author of "Making Peace with Your Past," said the material grew out of his personal struggle to overcome problems caused by growing up in a home where his father was an alcoholic. When he introduced the material in his church, people flocked to attend, including many from outside the church.

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"They continually told me, 'I can't believe the church is addressing these issues. I can't believe a Baptist church is addressing these issues.' I found out many people out there see us as creators of shame, not as healers of shame."

Christians need help identifying dysfunctions in their lives and moving on to experience spiritual growth, Edgemon said.

At First Baptist Church of Concord in Knoxville, Tenn., where Edgemon serves as interim pastor, single parents have been identified as a focus of creative, support ministry.

A church repair team started primarily to assist senior adults has been expanded to include single parents. A big brother and big sister program soon will be launched. A time-out program to provide child care for single parents to have a night out each week is being planned.

Edgemon urged churches to consider similar kinds of efforts for alcoholics and family members, for codependent persons and for those struggling with other kinds of dysfunctions.

While support groups are sponsored by many social service agencies, Edgemon said churches offer the dynamics listed in a recent issue of Christianity Today as needed to make such groups successful.

These include: a non-threatening place, help in facing difficult but vital issues, a community of faith, spiritual strength, empathy and accountability.

Edgemon said in addition to initiating new products the board will be working cooperatively with Rapha on additional LifeWay resources, taking Rapha materials prepared for a hospital setting and adapting them for church use.

"They will be theologically sound, group-oriented and church-centered," he said.

Divorce recovery, grief recovery, codependency, parents of prodigal children and many other topics need to be addressed. Special studies for teen-agers also are in the planning stage, Edgemon said.

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Professor says Scripture key
to fighting Satan's 'whispers'

By Chip Alford

Baptist Press
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NASHVILLE (BP)--Some may scoff at the idea of a literal devil, but not Bob Hughes. He knows Satan exists. He talks with him regularly.

No, he doesn't have visions or face-to-face encounters with an evil being but he does hear Satanic "whispers" every day.

"Yes, I believe there is a literal adversary of all Christians, an enemy, a devil -- Satan," the associate professor of communications and mass media at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary said. "The personality of Satan is very real to me."

Hughes said he hears Satan as a voice within himself -- a cynical, mocking, irreverent "counter" conscience that makes certain he considers alternatives to the "shoulds" that demand his time and energy. This inconsistent voice can take many approaches, he said, from the seductive and naughty to the patient and playful. But one thing is constant. No matter what messages Satan whispers, they're all harmful lies.

According to Hughes, Satan has no new lies up his sleeve, either, so "none of us are unique in the temptations we suffer."

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"When it suits his purpose, Satan tells us each we are smarter, stupider, better, worse, cleaner, dirtier, more holy or more horrid than any generation that preceded us," he said.

Hughes said Christians should remember even Jesus was not exempt from Satan's temptations. The devil tried to mislead Christ during his 40-day fast in the wilderness, "but he knew how to fight back." And Jesus' model of response is "the model" believers still must follow today to break Satan's lies, Hughes said.

"Jesus quoted Scripture. He knew the Scriptures well and he knew how to apply them. We are far better prepared to resist Satan's whispers when we know -- and can apply -- the Scripture ourselves," he explained.

Realizing everyone suffers from Satan's temptations, Hughes decided to write a book dealing with some of the devil's most common deceptions. The result is "Satan's Whispers, Breaking the Lies That Bind," released in July by the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board's Broadman Press.

Each of the 13 chapters in the book is written as a dialogue between the author and Satan and each focuses on a particular lie the devil uses to lead Christians astray. Each chapter concludes with a section called "Breaking the Lie" which includes Scripture passages that expose the lie for what it is.

Some of the lies Hughes deals with in the book include:

-- the "you equal zero" lie: Satan's attack on personal esteem and self-worth. Scriptural answer: 2 Peter 3:9, Luke 19:10, John 3:16.

-- the "I'll never tell" lie: Satan's promise of freedom from all penalties. Scriptural answer: Acts 5:3-4, 2 Kings 5:26, Luke 8:17.

-- the "look out for number one" lie: Satan's encouragement of comparison and competition. Scriptural answer: Phil. 2:5-7, Matt. 7:1-2, Genesis 50:20.

-- the "throw in the towel" lie: Satan's attack on meaning and purpose in life. Scriptural answer: Hebrews 11:4, Esther 4:4, Phil. 4:13.

Hughes said his life "almost fell apart" while writing the book. Besides stress and tension, he also struggled with family illnesses and financial problems.

"It was a very difficult experience but maybe that means the book will be valuable to others in the battle against Satan's lies," Hughes said.

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Family times should include
worship, Bible study at home

By Linda Lawson

Baptist Press
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GLORIETA, N.M. (BP)--Asked to narrow a list of five priorities to two, most Christians choose items related to faith and family.

However, a time inventory of most families shows members spend little time together in any activity, almost none for family worship and Bible study.

"In a lot of families, we have left biblical instruction and teaching of Christian values to the churches," Cindy Waugh told participants in a conference on family Bible study and worship in the '90s. "It needs to start at home. The main responsibility should come from the parents."

Waugh, a layperson from First Baptist Church of Franklin, Tenn., led daily family enrichment sessions during the July 4-10 Discipleship Training Leadership Conference at Glorieta (N.M.) Baptist Conference Center.

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Family worship at home should not be thought of as an hour-long worship service, Waugh emphasized. Times may be as brief as three minutes but no longer than 15.

Common mistakes parents make which may lead to discontinuation of family worship, Waugh said, include trying to cover too much material, feeling guilty when they miss a day or two, choosing boring material or feeling every member must be present every day.

Ideally, Waugh said families conduct worship times in which older members share how they came to know Christ as their Savior. Those who are Christians can lead those who are not to become Christians at the appropriate time.

Ideally, in a two-parent home both parents are equally committed to Bible study and worship in the home.

When one parent is unwilling to participate in family worship, Waugh listed seven suggestions to the other parent:

- Don't force the issue.
- Wait for the appropriate time to encourage involvement.
- Discover what seems to be threatening about the activity.
- Help eliminate the fear of failure.
- Don't pout or nag.
- Establish a wholesome atmosphere with your positive attitude.
- Set up a worship time and place for the rest of the family that will not be offensive to the other partner.

Waugh listed four walls of a Christian home, beginning with righteousness.

"We as parents need to be the first role models for our children," she said.

The wall of reverence should include teaching beliefs and values through a godly lifestyle and modeling Bible study and prayer. "Help your child with Sunday school preparation," she urged.

Regulation should include discipline, establishing clear family rules and appropriate punishments, Waugh said. And parents should communicate respect for the Lord's name, the Lord's day and the Lord's house.

"There is a certain respect and reverence that needs to come when we go into God's house," she said. "We can be reverent without being solemn or acting like we're going to a funeral."

In addition to family devotions which parents should strive to hold 80 to 90 percent of the time, Waugh said family worship may include seizing teachable moments with children and family activity times.

She cited resources such as the book "Families Planning for Bible Study and Worship" by Harry Lucenay, pastor of First Baptist Church of San Antonio, Texas, and published by the Sunday School Board's Convention Press.

Also, the Holman Family Worship Bible includes family worship suggestions and songs. Several SSB periodicals -- Home Life, Living with Preschoolers, Living with Children, Living with Teenagers, Open Windows and encounter! -- have devotional thoughts and worship suggestions.

Children need to learn
Baptist history, heritage

By Linda Lawson

GLORIETA, N.M. (BP)--As here-and-now thinkers with a limited concept of time and space, children might seem like the last candidates for learning history, especially Baptist history.

"History can become real, even to young children," contended Robert Brown, editor of children's materials in the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board's discipleship training department. He led a session on teaching Baptist history and heritage to children during the July 4-10 Discipleship Training Leadership Conference at Glorieta (N.M.) Baptist Conference Center.

Unfortunately, the worst method of teaching history, using disconnected dates and places, also is the most common, Brown said.

With children, history should be couched in stories about people and should be connected with something in the present.

For example, he said family reunions represent excellent opportunities for children to learn the history of their families.

"They allow children to have a sense of connectedness to many generations and see they are part of a big family," Brown said.

Visiting cemeteries also provides unique learning opportunities for children.

"Kids are fascinated with tombstones and the fact that these are people who once lived," Brown said. Also, as they see 19th and early 20th century graves of children, adults can talk with them about the many diseases that claimed children as victims.

Building a bridge from the past to the present must be considered in effectively teaching history to children, he said.

With Baptist history, "you don't just start with the idea that Baptists made a significant contribution to religious liberty" in America. Stories of people such as Thomas Helwys, Roger Williams, John Clarke, William Screven, John Leland and others can help lay a foundation.

Telling stories of historical figures to children needs to be done with awareness of their limited understanding of time and chronology.

"Long ago and far away may be the best that can be done with young children," Brown said.

Pictures, ballads, drama, art and maps should be used to help history come alive for children, he said.

"I believe children need to recover a sense of their history, a proud heritage of contributions Baptists have made to America," Brown said.

He cited as a resource a newly revised book, "Heroes of Freedom" by Margaret Williams and Rob Sanders, released this summer by the board's Convention Press.

The book tells the stories of 13 Baptist heroes in England and America.

"Baptists made a significant contribution to American history, especially as advocates of freedom of religion through the First Amendment and the Bill of Rights," Brown said. "This book makes history come alive by helping children understand the people who made history."

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As a bridge to the present, the book concludes with five suggested actions for protecting religious liberty:

- Thank God for religious freedom.
- Learn about people who helped win religious freedom.
- Do not take religious freedom for granted.
- Use your freedom to read the Bible, go to church, pray and tell others about Jesus.
- Be true to your own beliefs but stand up for the right of others to choose for themselves what to believe.

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Conflict need not be
negative, speaker says

By David Winfrey

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RIDGECREST, N.C. (BP)--The director of missions knew it might be a long night when a policeman met him at the church door to tell him he couldn't come inside.

The Southern Baptist church, which was voting that night on becoming independent Baptist, had experienced several changes, constitutional amendments and member excommunications since calling a new pastor, said the director of missions, who asked not to be identified.

"It's really a sticky situation," he said, adding the congregation had split and the group occupying the church was one-third the size of the original group.

So the DOM stood outside in the snow with several other "non-voting" members, talking with the policeman while business was conducted inside.

Welcome to level-five conflict, a level of fighting characterized by restraint and a lose-lose situation.

But disagreements don't have to be a destructive experience, a conflict management consultant told directors of missions during Home Missions Week at the Ridgecrest Baptist Conference Center, June 27-July 3.

"Conflict, in and of itself, is a neutral thing, said Glenn Akins, director of missions development at the South Carolina Baptist Convention. "How we deal with it often is what ends up being embarrassing."

Often, Christians believe the body of Christ should always be in harmony, Akins said. But churches in transition, either improving or declining, will encounter normal, even predictable, disagreements, he said.

"It's natural for adolescent congregations to struggle over the priority of resources," he said. "It's not necessarily that the pastor is being a jerk about wanting to build himself a sanctuary."

In addition to being a poor Christian witness, disagreements can result in stress, which in extreme cases have proven deadly. Akins cited cases of people in conflict suffering heart attacks or becoming violent.

"This is very serious stuff," he said. "People do die because of church conflicts."

During disagreements, Akins encourages the parties involved to deal with the issues involved. Poor conflict managers focus on personalities instead, he said.

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Early stages of conflict should simply involve face-to-face talks with the groups involved, he said, while higher degrees of disagreement may require a mediator or even legal counsel.

In some rare cases, church discord stems from "unhealthy people with unhealthy motives" or from people "who just have a high need for control," Akins said.

"For those kinds of folks, it's like they're squeezing the life out of you trying to control you," he said.

Churches may have to use "tough love" against such agitators or controllers, he said. "We cannot allow those kinds of people to destroy the body of Christ."

Ultimately, Akins said, Christians must try to manage conflict while relying on God to resolve it. "The resolution of the hearts is something that is best left to the work of the Spirit."