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**-- BAPTIST PRESS**  
News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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February 16, 1993

93-30

NASHVILLE -- Sex education awkward topic; new Christian series can help.  
NASHVILLE -- Abstinence is biblical to be campaign emphasis.  
TEXAS -- His placemat ministry offers daily guidelines for family.  
MISSOURI -- Seminary faculty note 'top books' of 1992.

Sex education awkward topic;  
new Christian series can help

By Terri Lackey

Baptist Press  
2/16/93

NASHVILLE (BP)--Talking to children about sex is apt to bring perspiration to the brow of many parents, an editor of Christian sex education materials acknowledges.

"Most parents feel nervous about initiating this kind of education with their children," said Jimmy Hester, coordinating editor of the Christian Sex Education series to be released beginning in April by the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board's discipleship and family adult department.

Hester said he believes the Christian sex education materials for children, ages 4-17, will make the task of approaching the uncomfortable topic of sex easier for parents.

"These are home-based resources," Hester said. "The church's role is to act as a training and support base in helping parents feel comfortable using these resources at home."

The series has been a long time coming, Hester said. For five years, secular and denominational workers have been writing, refining and field testing the resources "in order to offer the best possible Christian product to parents and churches."

The series of six books includes resources for parents and church leaders as well as for children, youth and married couples, Hester said. The books for children and youth are broken down into groups which include young children, middle-aged children, pre-adolescents and adolescents. The books may be purchased separately or in a set.

Teen-age pregnancy statistics and the continued rise of sexual activity among youth reveal the obvious need for Christian sex education materials, Hester said.

One American teen in 10 becomes pregnant each year, he noted. For the past decade, about 1 million teens a year have become pregnant, he added.

Recent studies indicate more than half the teen-age population has sex by the time they are 17 years old, leading to an epidemic proportion of sexually transmitted diseases among that age group, he said.

Hester listed six purposes for developing the series of books on sex education with a Christian perspective. They are:

-- to assist parents within Southern Baptist churches to rear mature, responsible, Christian children who apply biblical principles of sexuality in their everyday lives.

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- to develop well-tested, reliable and effective resources for parents and churches to help educate their children about sexuality and how God intends for it to be expressed.
- to promote abstinence, chastity, high self-esteem and self-discipline among children and youth.
- to assist parents and churches to lead children and youth to understand the good God intended for sexual intercourse within marriage and to encourage them to enjoy this relationship only within a God-ordained covenant marriage.
- to teach appreciation for one's body as God-created and the responsibility each person has to maintain appropriate boundaries with others.
- to enable Southern Baptists to join and positively influence a growing movement in the United States advocating abstinence and chastity.

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**Abstinence is biblical  
to be campaign's emphasis**

By Terri Lackey

**Baptist Press  
2/16/93**

NASHVILLE (BP)--"Abstinence is OK." For unmarried couples, it's biblical. And it is the lifestyle to which Christian teens should abide, a youth ministry consultant said.

That is the message behind the theme, "True Love Waits," a campaign backing the new Christian Sex Education resources being released beginning in April by the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board.

In this day and age, "we must challenge teens and young unmarried adults to say, 'Abstinence is OK,'" said Richard Ross, youth ministry consultant in the general leadership department of the board's church growth and Sunday school division. Ross, creator of the "24-Hour Counselor" cassettes for youth, participated in the five-year development of the Christian Sex Education series for parents and children.

The board's new Christian sex education materials and the campaign theme, True Love Waits, will be introduced to youth ministers at the Youth Ministry National Conference 4, April 19-23 in Nashville, according to Ross. During the conference, youth ministers will be challenged to take the message of abstinence back to parents, teens and churches.

Jimmy Hester, coordinating editor of the sex education materials, said the Sunday School Board is "joining the bandwagon already happening in the country dealing with the emphasis on abstinence."

The purpose of the campaign is to inspire, inform, and call youth to adhere to the biblical mandate from God and commit to refraining from sex before marriage, Hester said.

"We believe that the only safe sex is abstinence," he added.

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**His placemat ministry offers  
daily guidelines for family life**

By Ken Camp

**Baptist Press  
2/16/93**

AUSTIN, Texas (BP)--Wes Allen believes every year should be "The Year of the Family." And Allen, a deacon at Hyde Park Baptist Church in Austin, has designed a practical guide to help families start that year any day of any month.

Allen took family life insights gained over 23 years of marriage, 19 years of parenting and a lifetime of Bible study, distilling them into 31 daily readings and printing them on a laminated placemat.

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"Daily Guidelines to Strong and Happy Christian Families" packs biblically-based readings for each day of the month -- plus five additional insights on families and discipleship -- onto the front and back of a 13-inch by 17-inch placemat.

Allen developed the initial version of "Daily Guidelines" about five years ago after some successful real estate dealings enabled him to quit his job at IBM and devote most of his time to family ministry.

For several years, Allen and his wife, Mary, had operated an informal counseling ministry for couples facing marital problems, applying principles learned in various Christian family life seminars and conferences. While that one-to-one ministry was gratifying, Allen wanted to reach more people with the insights he had gained.

"There are lots of good books on marriage and parenting, and there are plenty of good tapes available. But after awhile, they end up on a shelf gathering dust," Allen said.

"I'm not all that swift a public speaker, so a teaching ministry didn't seem right. Finally, the Lord led me to the placemat idea."

Allen saw the placemat as a vehicle that could present deep truths in a concise way. It also would be a visible reminder at the dinner table of the need to gather for a daily family time of sharing and praying -- a need Allen has come to recognize based on his own experiences.

"When I was a first-grader, I was so severely stricken by polio that the doctors informed my parents that I would be confined to an iron lung and -- at best -- to a wheelchair for the few remaining years that I would live," he recalled.

But his Christian parents prayed, asked other believers to join them in praying for their son's recovery and provided a solid support system for him.

"Through the prayers, I believe, God delivered me from the doctors' horrifying prognosis," he said.

Although he has suffered some muscle loss and has had to undergo two operations, Allen has lived a relatively normal life for 53 years.

"Through all this, I have developed a strong love of the Christian family, faith in God and belief in the power of prayer," he said.

Allen's love of family, faith in God and belief in prayer all are graphically displayed on the "Daily Guidelines" placemat, which pictures Christ as the foundation of a solid home, prayer as filling the attic, and faith-building daily readings throughout the house.

Allen's "placemat ministry" captured national attention when it was featured in Michael McManus' syndicated "Ethics and Religion" column.

The placemat currently is being sold in three Austin-area Christian bookstores and through three Christian counseling centers, including the center sponsored by Hyde Park Baptist Church.

"Daily Guidelines" also is available by mail order. The placemats may be ordered for \$5.95 each, including postage and handling, or four for \$15 through "Thee Family," Box 530444, Austin, TX 78753.

"It seems to be very timely in relation to the 1993 Baptist General Convention of Texas emphasis on the 'Year of the Family,'" Allen said. "With every fiber of my being, I earnestly desire that God uses me and this little product to turn the family situation around -- especially in the churches."

Seminary faculty note  
'top books' of 1992

By Brenda J. Sanders

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (BP)--What were the top religious books published in 1992? According to administrators and faculty members at Southern Baptists' six seminaries, they included reference works, devotional books and doctrinal guides.

Baptist Press recently asked several staff members at each of the seminary campuses to recommend their favorite books published during the past year. Their selections were based on literary excellence, as well as pertinence and timeliness of the subject matter.

The following list may serve as a reading guide for both ministers and laypersons in Southern Baptist churches. (The publications are listed in no particular order.)

1. "Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels," edited by Joel B. Green, Scot McKnight and I. Howard Marshall, published by InterVarsity Press.

Two seminarians recommended this reference work, subtitled "A Compendium of Contemporary Biblical Scholarship." Both L. Russ Bush and H. Alan Brehm were impressed with the dictionary's easy-to-use format and comprehensive topic selection.

Bush, vice president for academic affairs and dean of the faculty at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, N.C., noted: "This dictionary provides a topical context for all major names, places, things and ideas in the Gospels. The quality of the articles is consistently high. Sermon preparation, as well as scholarly renewal, would be well served by this volume."

Brehm, assistant professor of New Testament at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, said, "The dictionary serves as a compendium of the best critical scholarship on the Gospels from an evangelical perspective. The format makes it easy for anyone to locate a topic of interest, in contrast to the normal monograph."

2. "The Clown in the Belfry: Writings on Faith and Fiction" and "Listening to Your Life," both written by Frederick Buechner, published by HarperSanFrancisco.

Buechner's writings are favorites of the professors at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Kansas City, Mo., according to the two who recommended these books.

Mike Graves, Midwestern's assistant professor of preaching, said of "The Clown in the Belfry": "Every sentence is masterful. Buechner writes as one who has experienced life in the real world. His writings inspire me to be a better preacher and Christian and to live with myself even when I have failed at both -- because in the final analysis, God loves me anyway."

Wilburn T. Stancil, associate professor of Christian theology at Midwestern, recommended "Listening to Your Life," a compilation of 366 excerpts from Buechner's writings that is formatted as a tool for daily meditation. He noted, "Buechner's works are prophetic and poignant. They cut to the heart of what truly matters in life and elevate the ordinary experience as a moment for encountering God."

3. "Managing Church Conflict," written by Hugh Halverstadt, published by Westminster/John Knox.

Larry McSwain, provost at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., recommended this book as "a superb guide for dealing with church conflict in a highly structured and logical process. It is the best book in print on the topic, well-written, based on solid research and easily applied to real conflict situations."

4. "New American Commentary: Commentary of Acts," written by John Polhill, published by Broadman Press.

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David S. Dockery, dean of the school of theology at Southern Seminary, said this reference work is "the finest commentary on the book of Acts written in the English language. With the use of theological interpretation and literary critical analysis, Polhill brings out new insights in the book of Acts that are helpful for pastor, student and teacher alike. It is carefully researched and extremely readable."

5. "The Doctrine of the Bible," written by David S. Dockery, published by Convention Press.

Clayton K. Harrop, vice president for academic affairs at Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary in Mill Valley, Calif., said Dockery's book deals with "one of the most important issues of church life today, and it deals with this issue in a very balanced and informative way. The book explores the nature, purpose and interpretation of the Bible in a way that can be easily understood and applied. It includes chapters on the inspiration, revelation, dependability and authority of the Bible."

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