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October 12, 1993

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Jim Henry unapologetic about
Cooperative Program support

By Barbara Denman

Baptist Press
10/12/93

ORLANDO, Fla. (BP)--During a time when First Baptist Church of Orlando, Fla., was purchasing and constructing buildings valued at \$39 million, pastor Jim Henry challenged his congregation to remain faithful in mission giving beyond their land and walls.

As a result of that commitment, the Orlando church has consistently set the pace for other churches in giving through the Cooperative Program, the Southern Baptist Convention's unified giving plan to fund state, national and world missions.

With a pledge to give 14 percent of undesignated receipts through the Cooperative Program, the 10,000-member congregation in 1991 and 1992 gave more money to the cooperative mission effort than any other church in the Southern Baptist Convention. In 1990 the congregation placed second and in 1989 third among all Southern Baptist churches.

The record giving can be credited "to our people having a heart for missions," Henry said. "We made it a priority to give to missions. The people gave and were faithful."

Their commitment to the Cooperative Program at a time when finances were stretched was a "sacrifice," diverting funds from ministries within the congregation, Henry noted.

But it was a "deliberate choice," he said, "teaching people that the tithe comes off the top."

The members of First Baptist are "some of the most generous people in the world," Henry contended. "They're not people with big money. The average person gives \$50-\$60 a week. And a lot of our people are double tithing."

The congregation remained faithful during a period when some members experienced financial setbacks through mass layoffs and the flattening of the economy and land prices, Henry said.

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But the turmoil within the Southern Baptist Convention has served only to strengthen the congregation's resolve, Henry said.

"The leaders felt like the convention was going through a tough time," he recalled. "We needed to be steady and couldn't cut back even one time during the shaky times."

Noting many of First Baptist's members come from non-Southern Baptist backgrounds, Henry said the key to consistent missions support has been education. "I talk about it (the Cooperative Program) unapologetically as the opportunity affords. I try to teach our people what it is.

"It's a constant challenge."

Henry said the offering has become a time of inspiration as well as teaching when he recognizes the presence of Southern Baptist missionaries and seminary students.

Especially effective in the education process is an annual three-week "Missions Fest" encouraging members to participate personally, financially and prayerfully in international, state and local mission projects. The three weeks include personal testimonies, videos and slides of mission involvement highlighting evangelistic results.

The culminating missions celebration also encourages parents and grandparents to pray that they "will release" their children if God calls them into missionary service.

During Christmas, members are asked to give to missions an amount equal to that which they spend on family Christmas gifts.

Each year, 75 to 100 members respond to the call to participate in foreign and home mission trips. Another 300 are involved in local missions. Rather than divert money from the Cooperative Program, this personal involvement benefits the congregation's younger members who "like to see hands on where my money is going."

But ultimately, the pastor "will set the tone" for missions support, Henry said. "They've got to see and feel your heart and that you are personally strong and committed to Southern Baptists and the Cooperative Program."

That reflection is not difficult for members to see when talking to Henry. "I was raised a Southern Baptist and am a product of a lot of other people's generosity.

"I see the benefit of what the Cooperative Program does," he said. "I haven't seen anything to match it. I think it's the best way to do what we're doing."

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**FMB taps Brotherhood's Furgerson
to head expanded volunteer effort**

By Bob Stanley

**Baptist Press
10/12/93**

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--James L. Furgerson, a leader in the Southern Baptist volunteer movement, will join the Foreign Mission Board staff in December as the sparkplug for broader use of volunteers worldwide.

FMB President Jerry Rankin introduced Furgerson, adult division director of the Brotherhood Commission since 1989, at the FMB trustees' Oct. 11-13 meeting. He also outlined his vision to "enlarge the channels of opportunity" for volunteers globally.

Rankin noted "tremendous interest for personal involvement in missions" exists among Southern Baptists. "Churches, state conventions and other agencies are ready to focus resources on reaching a lost world overseas, and they want to do it through the Foreign Mission Board," he said.

The Foreign Mission Board, Rankin said, must do all it can to facilitate "the opportunity for more Southern Baptists to participate in the greatest experience in the world -- having a part in sharing Christ with a lost world."

Furgerson, 53, will fill a vacancy left when Ron Boswell became pastor of Grove Avenue Baptist Church in Richmond, Va. Bill Peacock, associate director of the volunteer department, has been interim director since June 25.

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"Few people are as well-connected with the scope of state leadership, churches and laymen across the Southern Baptist Convention as Jim Furgerson," Rankin said.

In his role at Brotherhood, Furgerson has directed the National Fellowship of Baptists in Missions and has served as national coordinator for church renewal and disaster relief.

During this summer's record Midwest floods, Furgerson and his wife, Patti, worked 47 days straight at the American Red Cross headquarters in St. Louis. They supervised Southern Baptist flood response that provided 2 million meals to flood victims.

Rankin also cited Furgerson's work in support of Southern Baptists' Kurdish relief projects in Iran, Iraq and Turkey, for which the Brotherhood leader recruited volunteers, helped in orientation and provided logistical support. Furgerson also has worked in volunteer projects in the Virgin Islands, Hawaii, Guam, Mexico, India, Peru, Ecuador, Jordan, Europe, East Asia and the Commonwealth of Independent States (formerly the Soviet Union).

James Williams, president of the Brotherhood Commission, praised Furgerson's "outstanding service" through the commission. "No one has a more caring heart or more desire to see people come to Christ," he said.

Furgerson's "excellent leadership, especially in disaster ministries, has enabled Southern Baptists to gain national recognition for their efforts," Williams said. "Though we regret losing him from our staff, his presence and influence on the Foreign Mission Board staff will greatly strengthen the wonderful partnership we share with the FMB."

A naval aviator with the U.S. Marine Corps for 14 years, Furgerson flew more than 500 combat missions in Vietnam in 1969-70. He attained the rank of lieutenant colonel before leaving the Marine Corps in 1980.

Before joining the Brotherhood staff, he was an administrator for the South Texas Children's Home, a Baptist institution in Beeville, Texas, and the Missouri Baptist Children's Home in St. Louis.

Rankin said Furgerson's "military background, managerial experience, love for people and energetic enthusiasm will enable the Foreign Mission Board to enter a new dimension of volunteer involvement in missions as we move toward the 21st century."

A native of St. Louis, Furgerson holds degrees from Southwest Baptist University, Bolivar, Mo.; Mississippi College in Clinton; and Indiana University in Bloomington. He held youth ministry posts in Mississippi and Florida and also was a Baptist Student Union director at Indiana University.

He and his wife have two grown sons, Jim Jr., 26, and Mike, 24.

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(BP) photo (mugshot) mailed to state Baptist newspapers by the Richmond bureau of Baptist Press. Cutline available on SBCNet Newsroom.

Retiring missionaries reflect
on legacy of 2,785 years' service By Donald D. Martin

Baptist Press
10/12/93

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--Success depends not on what you bring to the mission field, but what you leave behind.

So said missionary doctor Sam Cannata at a service honoring him and other retiring Southern Baptist missionaries Oct. 11.

Because of civil wars and unrest, Cannata and his wife, Ginny, faced the agonizing decision of leaving work and home numerous times during their 36 years of mission service in six African countries.

"We've probably been run out of more countries than most people have been assigned to," said Cannata, from Houston. Mrs. Cannata is from Hollandale, Miss.

Such sudden departures forced Cannata to assess the value of his medical ministry, which for years focused on preaching to masses of people waiting for medical treatment.

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"When you do mobile medical clinic work, it's not difficult to preach to thousands of people regularly," he said. "But in 1977, when we were chased out of Ethiopia by the communists, the Lord asked us a tough question. He asked, 'What did you leave there that was really eternal?' And then God said, 'You have been scattering seed, but you have not been planting them.'"

The Cannatas abruptly altered their approach and began putting most of their efforts into personal discipleship. The revelation produced a missionary career that's become known throughout eastern and southern Africa for its effectiveness.

They also seldom miss a chance to ask the same profound question of other missionaries. Media missionary Steve Evans remembers Cannata querying him about what he was leaving behind of eternal value in his own work.

"It was a life-changing question," Evans said. "It changed everything. I knew my (media) products were reaching people. They were even changing lives. But I wasn't involved in the lives of people. From that time on, I decided nothing -- no program, no product -- was going to be more important to me than people and their relationships."

Foreign Mission Board President Jerry Rankin, presiding over his first service honoring retirees, noted the impact they made on his own missionary career.

"As I look out among you I see many who taught me how to be a missionary," he said. "As I came to serve among you veterans, by your example and your commitment, I learned what it meant to be used of the Lord and the price that had to be paid."

Rankin spoke to 86 retiring missionaries attending the service at Central Baptist Church in Richmond, Va. The service recognized the work of 99 missionaries who served a combined total of 2,785 years in 50 countries.

Like Cannata, missionary Bob Fricke understood where his mission priorities should be. "I learned years ago that teaching had more to do with students than it had to do with subjects," said Fricke, from Fort Worth, Texas. He worked for 29 years in theological education in Cuba, Mexico and Costa Rica.

"I've never been a great preacher or evangelist in the professional sense, but the classroom has been where the Lord has used me the best," he said. "My greatest satisfaction has come from my association with future pastors and leaders in Latin America. I'm sure that I learned much more from them than they could possibly have learned from me."

Other missionaries spoke about their link in a Southern Baptist mission chain that goes back 148 years. But medical missionary Mariam Misner highlighted the part of her 37 years of work in Indonesia that was timeless.

Misner, from Savannah, Mo., recalled how a fellow Christian worker used the love of Christ to transcend the daily restrictions on Christian evangelism in a Muslim community. A Muslim patient, whose demands and complaints seemed endless, was struck by the tireless service and gentle care of a Christian nurse.

"With great patience and cheerfulness, she waited on (him) until one day he said, 'Why do you do this? You don't have to, you know,'" Misner related. "And that was her chance. She said, 'It is because of love. You see, Christ loves us and he loves you through us.'"

The man did not become a Christian that day. But he left the hospital with a rich seed of understanding about Christ that other Christians may one day harvest, Misner said.

Rankin stressed a similar point. The retiring missionaries, he said, don't know half the people who have become Christians because of their missionary careers.

He then quoted the son of Adoniram Judson, the first Baptist foreign missionary from the United States: "If we succeed without suffering, it's because others have suffered before us. And if we suffer without success, it's so that others will succeed after us."

Mission board breaks ground for new office building

ATLANTA (BP)--Expr ssing their desire for a building to facilitate the spread of the gospel, Home Mission Board leaders broke ground Oct. 11 for new offices.

More than 350 people gathered on a wooded lot in the north Atlanta suburb of Alpharetta for the ceremony. The building is scheduled to be completed in 1995 to coincide with the agency's 150th anniversary and the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting in Atlanta.

Larry Lewis, HMB president, said he dreams of a building that will be an attractive and functional "testimony to what God's people are about." The building will be a place where home missions personnel prayerfully seek God's leadership and experience the fellowship of co-laborers, Lewis said.

Brad Allen, chairman of the board and pastor of First Baptist Church in Duncan, Okla., said his only desire is that the building help Southern Baptists spread the gospel.

Thirty-four acres for the new building were purchased for \$1.3 million and a \$13.5 million building contract was awarded in September, said Ralph Smith, chairman of the site and building committee and pastor of Hyde Park Baptist Church in Austin, Texas.

Three years ago the agency sold its midtown Atlanta property for \$14.5 million, Smith said. That money plus its investment income will be used for the new building, Lewis said. No Cooperative Program or Annie Armstrong Easter Offering money will be used for the building, he added.

The new five-story structure will house the Atlanta operations under one roof rather than five buildings, Lewis noted. It will eliminate the need for off-site warehouses and provide more conference space.

Moving to a facility that is more energy efficient and requires less maintenance will free more income for missions needs, Lewis said. Estimates indicate the board will save \$315,000 per year on decreased property taxes, maintenance costs, security needs, communications and insurance.

A long-range planning committee appointed in 1986 determined that upgrading the board's midtown facilities was not financially feasible. It would have required \$2 million just to meet city fire codes on sprinkler systems, the committee found.

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Evangelical environmental effort initiated at White House meeting

Baptist Press
10/12/93

WASHINGTON (BP)--The Evangelical Environmental Network, a concerted effort to lead evangelical Christian churches in the United States to be active in environmental issues, was inaugurated recently in a White House meeting with Vice President Al Gore.

David McKenna, president of Asbury Theological Seminary, briefed Gore on EEN's three-year program designed to inform and produce action in the evangelical community on environmental issues. The program includes plans for a late October institute on the environment, the presentation of an evangelical document on the issue and establishment of "covenant congregations" committed to environmental stewardship.

EEN is the evangelical member of The National Religious Partnership for the Environment, which also consists of the United States Catholic Conference, the National Council of Churches and the Consultation on the Environment and Jewish Life.

The evangelical effort is part of a three-year program by The National Religious Partnership to involve religious bodies in caring for the environment. The partnership's program, including the effort of EEN, was initiated with a day of activities Oct. 4, including a White House briefing.

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"Evangelicals who believe in the authority of the Word cannot default on our responsibility for the stewardship of the environment," McKenna said. "As full members of the National Partnership, we have the opportunity to influence a biblically grounded, scientifically informed environmental policy for our nation."

Other EEN representatives attending were Robert Dugan, director of the National Association of Evangelicals' Office of Public Affairs; Steve Hayner, president of Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship; Ron Sider, president of Evangelicals for Social Action; Paul Thompson, vice president at World Vision; Calvin DeWitt, president of the Au Sable Institute; Jim Wallis, editor of Sojourners magazine.

No Southern Baptists were invited to join in the delegation, an EEN spokesman said.

Some Southern Baptists, however, participated in a 1992 meeting of leaders from the fields of religion and science which led to the National Partnership program. At the conference, 150 leaders signed a general document on concern for the environment. Among signers were Richard Land, executive director of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission; Cecil Sherman, coordinator of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship; and Foy Valentine, former CLC executive director.

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S.C. convention board, hospital
OK 'shared ministry' agreement

By Ben L. McDade

Baptist Press
10/12/93

WHITE OAK, S.C. (BP)--A "Commitment To A Shared Ministry" was announced by South Carolina Baptist Convention's general board and South Carolina Baptist Hospital Inc. officials at a joint news conference Oct. 11.

The statement, which includes an end of legal ties between the convention and hospital, resulted from a series of meetings to forge out relationships between the convention and hospital after hospital trustees announced in August their intentions to alter the way hospital trustees are elected. Prior to the trustees' decision to make their board self-perpetuating, the convention had elected hospital trustees, as the convention does for all its agencies and institutions.

In reading the joint statement, Clarence Freeman, chairman of the convention's general board, said, "We have decided that it is not in either of our best interests to further debate the rightness or wrongness of past events that have brought us to this juncture.

"Rather, it is our desire to begin what we believe is a new 'Commitment To A Shared Ministry' that will benefit the South Carolina Baptist Convention's primary purpose of missions and evangelism and South Carolina Baptist Hospital's primary purpose of meeting the mental, spiritual and physical health needs of the residents of South Carolina and surrounding areas."

The joint statement was presented on behalf of convention and hospital officials by Freeman, pastor of Leawood Baptist Church in Greenville. Also present for the news conference were B. Carlisle Driggers, executive secretary-treasurer for the convention; Steven M. Cloud, convention president and pastor of Northside Baptist Church in West Columbia; Charles D. Beaman Jr., president of South Carolina Baptist Hospital; and Lester Branham, hospital trustee chairman and pastor of Lake City First Baptist Church.

The news conference was held immediately following the opening session of the South Carolina Baptist Convention general board semiannual meeting at White Oak Conference Center, located near Winnsboro.

One of the board's first actions was to approve a recommendation of its executive committee to settle the matter of future relationships between the convention and the hospital, with main facilities in Columbia and Easley. The recommendation already had been approved by hospital trustees.

The recommendation next will be presented for consideration by messengers attending the 173rd annual meeting of the South Carolina Baptist Convention when it convenes Nov. 16-17 at Carolina Coliseum in Columbia.

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According to the statement, the agreement begins with two major points: "The South Carolina Baptist Convention acknowledges the severance of legal ties between the hospital and convention. The South Carolina Baptist Convention will no longer fund South Carolina Baptist Hospital."

The convention had budgeted a 1993 allocation of more than \$850,000 to the hospital, in addition to a statewide Mother's Day offering. Hospital officials had said the total was .02 percent of its annual receipts of \$320 million.

"Hospital trustees have incorporated into their charter a provision ensuring that a majority of its board will be comprised of members of cooperating churches of the South Carolina Baptist Convention," the statement also noted.

The statement also said the hospital's board recently reaffirmed the same policy prohibiting abortion "except when medically necessary" that has existed since the 1987 South Carolina Baptist Convention.

The statement said the two organizations are proposing that "we continue our relationship of mutual respect and purpose through a 'Commitment To A Shared Ministry.' Our recent discussions caused both parties to revisit our historic roles in providing for the spiritual and physical well-being of those we serve throughout our state. This process led to an understanding that existing hospital ministries, including benevolent care, clinical pastoral education, pastoral counseling, chaplaincy ministries, and conferences for personal growth and development led by outstanding speakers are programs that should be continued. South Carolina Baptist Hospital has agreed to continue funding all of these programs."

The recommendation specifically proposes that the hospital contribute \$3 million over a three-year period to fund programs to assist South Carolina Baptist ministers. Funding will be provided to assist churches in providing medical insurance for ministers, to meet emergency medical needs for ministers, to assist hurting and/or terminated ministers, and to develop healthy church leaders.

At the end of the three-year period the hospital trustees will consider additional funding. The administration and governance of the Commitment To A Shared Ministry will rest solely with the South Carolina Baptist Convention.

Additionally, South Carolina Baptist Hospital will continue medical care for people in need by matching Mother's Day contributions from the churches of the South Carolina Baptist Convention at \$2 for each \$1 received up to \$350,000 per year. Also, the hospital will continue to fund the Baptist Benevolence Program, which amounts to an average of approximately \$1.1 million annually. Finally, pastoral counseling services will be provided by the hospital for Baptists regardless of their ability to pay.

The statement said that through discussions between the two organizations, officials "rediscovered the many mutual values shared between us." Those values include mutual benefits each organization has gained through affiliation with the other over the years in both finances and leadership. Because of the value placed on the past relationship, the two organizations "hope to modify the historical relationship between us and to strengthen the convention's influence in those areas where that influence is most valuable," according to the statement.

Branham said of the recommendation, "South Carolina Baptist Hospital is excited about the new partnership with the South Carolina Baptist Convention. We commend the convention's leadership for targeting this important need for the pastors of our state. The South Carolina Baptist Hospital is pleased to join with the convention in sharing in this vital ministry."

"We are confident that this 'Commitment To A Shared Ministry' will benefit Christ's work throughout South Carolina and will allow the South Carolina Baptist Convention and South Carolina Baptist Hospital to move forward toward a stronger and more secure future in joint ministry," Freeman said in concluding the joint statement.

**Baptist college official named
to Mississippi gambling post** By William H. Perkins Jr.

HATTIESBURG, Miss. (BP)--Paul A. Harvey, assistant to the president of William Carey College in Hattiesburg, Miss., since 1991, is headed to the Mississippi Gaming Commission as executive director, according to commission chairman Stuart C. Irby Jr. of Jackson.

Harvey, 56, is a retired U.S. Air Force two-star general whose last military assignment was as base commander of Keesler Air Force Base in Biloxi, Miss.

Harvey, who has no experience in the gambling industry, waged an unsuccessful campaign in 1992 for Mississippi's Fifth Congressional District seat, presently held by Gene Taylor.

Jim Edwards, president of the Baptist-affiliated college, said, "I am firmly opposed to gambling, which, I believe, is consistent with the position held by the vast majority of Mississippi Baptists. I was surprised to learn of Gen. Harvey's decision. . . . However, my view does not prevent me from saying that the State of Mississippi is fortunate to have a person of Gen. Harvey's integrity to head the regulatory arm of the gambling industry.

"Certainly, an industry that has such inherent evils needs a man of Gen. Harvey's independence and leadership to strengthen its regulatory arm," Edwards added.

Legislation mandated that the Gaming Commission split from the Mississippi State Tax Commission on Oct. 1 to become an independent agency. The legislation also called for Gov. Kirk Fordice to appoint three new gaming commissioners to take charge from the state's tax commissioners, who had been doing double duty as gaming commissioners.

The three new commissioners apparently decided to offer the position to Harvey early on the morning of their first day on the job, and they approved his appointment during their first formal meeting on Oct. 5.

Harvey's career also has included assignments as wing commander at Dover Air Force Base in Delaware and as inspector general at Scott Air Force Base in Illinois. He holds degrees from Miami (Ohio) University and Central Michigan University.

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**Affair-proof marriage involves
spouse's needs, therapist says** By Terri Lackey

Baptist Press
10/12/93

RIDGECREST, N.C.(BP)--Between 50 to 75 percent of the nation's wedded population dabble in extra-marital affairs, a Christian therapist said, noting those statistics show even Christians fall prey to the vulnerability that leads to sex outside of marriage.

Jerry Gill, a marriage and family therapist from Gainesville, Ga., and a member of Lakewood Baptist Church there, said popular social theory points to the trend that people no longer believe in commitment. Societal trend "seems to be saying people believe in their individual rights to personal fulfillment," Gill said.

But Gill said he does not adhere to that popular theory.

Gill led the workshop, "How to Build an Affair-Proof Marriage" during the Fall Festival of Marriage at Ridgecrest Baptist Conference Center near Asheville, N.C., Oct. 8-10.

"Celebrating Sex in Your Marriage" is the theme for this year's Fall Festival of Marriage conferences, sponsored by the Baptist Sunday School Board's discipleship and family adult department. A book by the same name, written by Dan and Sandra McGee, is one in a series of Christian sex education resources released by the BSSB this year.

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In his experience as a marriage counselor, Gill said "people do want commitment even though they know how much of a risk it can be. Commitment is a high-risk adventure.

"There is no way of looking down the road and around the corners."

While various sources deal out differing statistics relating to extra-marital affairs, Gill said, a survey in Christianity Today magazine revealed 28 percent of lay people answering the poll said they have engaged in sexual contact outside of marriage, while an additional 23 percent said they have engaged in sexual intercourse outside of marriage.

Of the pastors surveyed, Gill said 23 percent admitted to sexual contact, while an added 12 percent acknowledged sexual intercourse outside of marriage.

Gill likened marriage partners to stock car drivers who know they must prepare for the inevitable crash.

"Preventative work is a whole lot easier than damage control," he said.

Included in preventative work are weekends such as Fall Festivals spent with spouses in communication and study, he said. "You will probably not hear a lot of brand new stuff, but you will be reminded of things you know to be true. You are being nudged in the right direction while showing you value your relationship."

Gill said need for physical and emotional attention rather than marital dissatisfaction has been named as one of the major causes of extra-marital affairs.

Lack of understanding, attention, communication and just plain lust lead to affairs, Gill said.

"When a spouse feels lonely and isolated, he or she might seek the attention of someone else. There is probably nothing more lonely than sitting three feet away from a spouse who is inaccessible," he said. "When loneliness develops we begin to fantasize.

"Most affairs begin with friendships. It can even be someone the other spouse knows.

"What can start as physical attention from someone else leads to emotional attention and before you know it, you are telling another person vulnerabilities about yourself that should be reserved for your spouse," he added.

The excitement of an affair cannot compete with a marriage, Gill acknowledged.

"You are talking about an illusion competing with reality. In affairs, you come together purely for pleasure. There are no bills to pay, no obligations, no responsibilities."

Gill listed seven myths about affairs:

- 1) Everybody's doing it.
- 2) It's good for the relationship.
- 3) A person cannot possibly love his or her spouse and be involved with someone else.
- 4) It's the other spouse's responsibility. ("If you were a good spouse, your mate wouldn't be having an affair.")
- 5) The other person is more sexy than the spouse.
- 6) Pretending not to know is healthier.
- 7) The marriage is over.

Besides being biblically and morally wrong, Gill said the dangerous aspect of extra-marital affairs is they totally obliterate any trust in the marriage.

"In counseling, the most difficult part of the damage control is trying to rebuild the trust," he said.

Before leaping into the drowning waters of an affair, Gill suggested couples spend time together rediscovering each others' needs.

The top five most common needs listed by women are affection, conversation, honesty and openness, financial security and family commitment. The top five most common needs listed by men are sexual fulfillment, recreational companionship, domestic support, attractive spouse and admiration.

Other needs, Gill said, could include tim together, neatness, spirituality, ambition, intelligence, admit mistakes, sense of humor, strength of character, gentleness, patience, responsibility and calmness.

"We're all different and we can deal with our needs through communication. I suggest you spend 15-30 minutes every day in face-to-face conversation. You have earned the right to talk about significant things and intimate details of your lives.

"You need to make an intentional effort to meet each others' needs."

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Defensiveness can destroy marriages, pastor warns

By Terri Lackey

Baptist Press
10/12/93

RIDGECREST, N.C. (BP)--"Yes, but ...' is one of the most damaging phrases a spouse can use during a disagreement, a workshop leader told couples attending a Fall Festival of Marriage conference at Ridgecrest (N.C.) Baptist Conference Center, Oct. 8-10.

"The phrase, 'Yes, but ... ,' tells me I'm in a defensive conversation," Ron Stewart, pastor of Grace Baptist Church in Knoxville, Tenn., told couples attending the workshop, "Overcoming Defensiveness."

"That phrase says that all the time the other person was talking, you've been devising an attack," said Stewart, who has led marriage retreats for 10 years.

Defensive fighting is a common form of attack in marriages, said Stewart, who acknowledged usually one spouse is more likely to react defensively than the other.

But that defensive reaction leads to a snowball effect where couples suddenly find themselves protecting and defending their turfs, he said.

"A person just naturally gets defensive when he feels like he is being attacked."

Defensive behavior sparks all types of emotional responses, Stewart said, including anger, sadness, helplessness, frustration, disappointment, irritation, superiority and confusion.

"Defensiveness does not help the feeling of oneness and intimacy," Stewart said, adding understanding the root of defensive behavior can help disarm it.

Stewart said people respond defensively to "emotional hot spots."

"There are certain things about you that you don't allow people to talk about," he said. "It might be your weight; it might be your hair or lack of it."

People who respond defensively to their emotional hot spots are not responding reasonably, Stewart said.

"Emotional hot spots are usually related to self-worth, self-esteem and self-image," he said. "They are usually determined by past emotional experiences.

"That fourth-grade boy or girl still lives with you. The emotions you felt then continue to affect the way you relate to your spouse. Those hot spots will stay hot spots until you cool them off."

Defensiveness within the marriage relationship also can be caused by unresolved conflict, Stewart said.

"If you don't resolve the conflicts within your marriage, they will stay there and fester. When there is conflict, the husband and wife become enemies. And we typically hide our feelings from our enemies.

"One little emotional hot spot not dealt with can lead to divorce," he added.

Stewart said typical defensive reactions include verbal retaliation, withdrawal or speaking through children.

"Verbal retaliation is the most common form of attack," he said. "This type of communication drives an emotional wedge between couples and it is a violation of Scripture."

The Bible also condemns withdrawing, Stewart said. When a person withdraws, "all of his emotional stirrings and rage are still there. He just suppresses it because that's what he's been taught to do."

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Stewart called withdrawing "gunny sacking." A spouse might store up negative feelings toward his mate, then throw the gunny sack at her when it gets too full, he said.

"By withdrawing, you are robbing yourself of the joy of marriage, and it is a sin for you to withdraw and not shar with your spouse," he said.

To speak through the children is to badmouth the other spouse in front of them, "and that is a shame," Stewart said.

Stewart advised couples to analyze their defensiveness "and get to the root of it."

"Sometimes it is buried so deeply, you don't know why it's there. When you came into your marriage, you brought a sack of emotional baggage with you. And when you stopped sharing that with each other, you stopped growing," he said.

"You need to stop being defensive and start growing. Get professional help if that's what you need.

"Grab it today because today is your chance to build something better for tomorrow."

"Celebrating Sex in Your Marriage" is the theme for this year's Fall Festival of Marriage conferences, sponsored by the Baptist Sunday School Board's discipleship and family adult department. A book by the same name, written by Dan and Sandra McGee, is one in a series of Christian sex education resources released by the BSSB this year.

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Third national seniors meeting
slated for Nashville in May 1996

Baptist Press
10/12/93

NASHVILLE (BP)--Southern Baptist senior adults will christen a yet-to-be named arena in Nashville about 30 days after it is built in May 1996.

The third-ever Senior Adult Convention will be held in a new convention facility in Nashville on May 27-30, 1996, according to Jay Johnston, senior adult specialist in the Baptist Sunday School Board's discipleship and family adult department.

Johnston and Nashville Mayor Phil Bredesen signed a mock agreement for the arena's first meeting before news media Sept. 30.

Johnston said he expects about 25,000 "chronologically gifted" adults to attend the national convention for senior adults sponsored by the BSSB. Nashville tourism officials said the convention would be the largest ever held in the city. They projected the convention would pump about \$4 million into the local economy.

"I always thought Nashville would be a great city to hold a convention, but we just didn't have any facilities," Johnston said.

By 1996, Johnston said the first of the "baby boomers" will be 50 and will be able to attend the convention. Senior adults are "America's largest market" as 6,000 persons a day turn 65, he added.

The board held its first senior adult convention in Fort Worth, Texas, in 1987 and its second in Atlanta this past May. Registration for the 1996 event will begin about a year before the scheduled convention date, Johnson said.

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CORRECTION: In (BP) story titled "BSSB offers toll-free number for 'True Love Waits' queries," dated 10/11/93, please note in the second paragraph: the time the True Love Waits toll free number is operational is 7:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. (Central Standard Time), not 3:30 as reported.

Thanks,
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