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Relevance, not chitchat, key
to successful women's ministry By Terri Lackey

Baptist Press
7/21/95

SOUTHERN BAPTIST HISTORICAL
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Nashville, Tennessee

RIDGECREST, N.C. (BP)--Expecting to get the female gender to attend the new women's enrichment ministry program at your church?

Better ditch the idle chitchat.

Relevance is the key ingredient for women of the '90s seeking spiritual fulfillment, said Chris Adams, women's enrichment ministry specialist for the Baptist Sunday School Board. Adams led a women's enrichment ministry training session at Ridgecrest (N.C.) Baptist Conference Center during Discipleship and Family Development Week, July 15-21.

"You've got to make the ministry you offer women in your church worth their while," she told the 100-plus women who attended the week-long training session. "Women are not going to come just to chitchat. You have to see where they are, ask them their needs and reach out."

Women are struggling for time and for balance in their lives, Adams said, adding 90 percent of women ages 16-65 are employed outside the home.

In 1960, 60 percent of women were choosing to stay home with their children, Adams said. That percentage currently has dropped to 7.

"At one point, women did whatever you offered because they had fewer options and they had time to do it. But it's different with the '90s women."

Adams said Christian women of the '90s are seeking spiritual fulfillment as well as ministry opportunities.

"They desire spiritual growth. They are not just into getting together to play. They want to grow to the point where they can reach someone else," she said.

Adams said churches should not see women's ministry programs as an option.

"It is a responsibility," she said. "In 'Experiencing God' (adult discipleship course), we learn that we can't be in a relationship with Christ and not be on mission or feel compelled to let people see the light. You can't stay where you are and go with God."

Adams listed several reasons why "it is important for churches to have women's ministry programs." She said the programs:

-- help churches grow spiritually and numerically. "What pastor doesn't like that? It happens when we reach out into the community and bring women to our church."

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-- allow women to feel accepted into the church when they join. "Someone is in charge of making sure they are in the right Sunday school class, finding out their needs and what ministry they would like to be involved in."

-- open the doors to relationships that "help women understand there are others out there just like them."

-- encourage women to discover and develop their spiritual gifts.

-- provide coordination and vision for reaching out. "It's good to have a central location -- one person or one group -- where women can go to find out what is being offered."

-- provide woman-to-woman understanding. "We need other women who can understand our emotions; women who have been there who can just sit down with us and talk to us and help us through things."

-- offer an opportunity for older women to instruct younger women. "Some ministries have older women who team up with younger women. They pray for each other daily, talk on the phone at least once a week, and go to lunch or somewhere together once a month."

-- help women fight spiritual battles. "Those of us who have a strong relationship with the Lord need to stand beside other women and help them fight those battles we deal with every day in this world."

While women's ministry programs provide good, solid spiritual and numerical growth to churches, they do not arise without some bit of misunderstanding, Adams said.

"Some people think women just want to take over the church, and that is not what women want. We don't even want to be a ministry separate from the church," she said. "We want to undergird the ministry of the church -- to be a part of the purpose of the church."

However, Adams said, some perceived problems with women's ministry come about legitimately and should be dealt with.

"Some people believe women will just take off on their ministry without consulting the church staff. And I'll admit we have done that.

"If you are a leader, you need to go to your pastor and share your heart with him. Keep him or other staff members informed, and let them know you can work side by side."

Women need fellowship, moral support, somebody to listen to them, Bible study and a relationship with God, and "women's enrichment programs provide that and, hop fully, more," Adams said.

She said women's enrichment ministry in a church seeks to accomplish three things:

- 1) Equip church women to enrich the lives of other women through Christ.
- 2) Enable a woman to discover her God-given gifts for ministry, to search out the needs in her church and community, and match those needs with her gift of service.
- 3) Lead women to accept Christ as Lord; to become women of deep prayer; and to become women who study the Bible and base their entire lives on the Word of God.

"We've got to make sure a woman's life will be impacted by what they are learning through these enrichment programs so that they can't help but go out into the world and minister to others."

A separate afternoon conference for women focused on the new in-depth Bible study, "A Woman's Heart: God's Dwelling Place," written by Beth Moore, a speaker from First Baptist Church, Houston. About 140 women attended the seminar, designed as an 11-week study of the Old Testament tabernacle. For more information about the new Bible study or women's ministry, call or write Chris Adams at (615) 251-2810; MSN 151, 127 Ninth Ave. N., Nashville, TN 37234.

**Women's ministry training
lends validation to emphasis**

By Terri Lackey

RIDGECREST, N.C. (BP)--With more than 100 other women attending a women's enrichment conference at Ridgecrest (N.C.) Baptist Conference Center, Frances Ingraham no longer feels she is paddling in uncharted waters.

"I started a women's ministry five years ago in my church and have felt like I've been in unexplained waters," said Ingraham, a lay leader at First Baptist Church, Franklin, Tenn. "It's good to be affirmed in what I have already done."

Most of the women attending the women's enrichment conference during Discipleship and Family Development Week at Ridgecrest were looking for ways to begin or sustain women's ministry programs in their churches, said Chris Adams, women's enrichment ministry specialist for the Baptist Sunday School Board.

The overwhelming interest in the Ridgecrest conferences and similar ones held at Glorieta (N.M.) Baptist Conference Center in June verified for Adams the need for continued training in women's enrichment ministries.

"We have got to train our women to be trainers of other women," said Adams, who spent 12 years at Green Acres Baptist Church in Tyler, Texas, building a women's ministry program before joining the BSSB staff in late 1994.

"An exploding trend" is what Mary Frances Bowley, of First Baptist Church, Peachtree City, Ga., calls sudden interest in women's ministry. A volunteer co-director of women's ministry in her church, Bowley said they had to turn women away for their first women's event in March -- a fashion show and fellowship.

"It was just amazing," Bowley said. "A group of women recognized the need for women's ministry, started praying about it and looking at what other churches were doing. Then when we had our first program, we had to turn people away.

"We had 30 decisions for the Lord that night, and at our next event we had 250 women, the maximum we planned for," she said.

"It wasn't us; it was the Lord. He's the one who made it all happen."

Beth Smith, who serves on staff at First Baptist Church, Orlando, Fla., in a new position as part-time women's enrichment minister, said "things have happened so fast in my church, too."

Her first event was a widow's brunch in June in which "several widows with a godly heritage gave their testimonies. It was really great."

Smith said she believes the enrichment training at Ridgecrest and Glorieta just "validates and confirms me personally and what other women want to do in their churches."

"When the training comes from the convention it gives more credibility to what's going on in the hearts and minds of women. This is an encouragement that we are moving in a way that is God-directed," Smith said. "Having an event like this just shines the light on women and their role in the church as an equal and different function."

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**Bulgarian officials allow
Baptists to resume building**

By Marty Croll

Baptist Press
7/21/95

SOFIA, Bulgaria (BP)--After a lengthy debate, the City Council of Sofia, Bulgaria, decided to allow Baptists to resume building an orphanage and Bible school on a piece of property leased in 1992.

But the council also decided to reverse the approval Baptists had won earlier to build a church and school on the property.

The city had abruptly ordered a delay on the project Feb. 17, saying it had begun an investigation. The council repeatedly postponed public action on the matter and in May r f r r d it to a city commission known to be hostile to it.

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Although disappointed the scope of their project has been limited, Bulgarian Baptists nonetheless were generally relieved at the news. They had been told the city might try to confiscate the entire property. In that case, Baptists stood to lose the \$175,000 they already had expended on the project.

"Praise the Lord," said Theo Angelov, president of the Baptist Union of Bulgaria. "Tell the brothers and sisters in the Baptist world how thankful we are for their prayers and their support."

The Baptist Union of Bulgaria and Sofia Baptist Church secured necessary documents and approvals before beginning construction last year. Records show the union received a lease for the property in 1992 and won a permit to build in 1993.

Sofia is the capital of Bulgaria, one of many Eastern European nations struggling with the responsibilities of freedom after decades of communist rule. Former communists, who now call themselves socialists, control much of the government there and align themselves with the powerful Bulgarian Orthodox Church bloc. The mayor is a socialist.

Angelov credits the reversal in the council to "the prayers and support" from all around the world. "Without the international pressure brought by these people, this would have been impossible," he said.

Even now Angelov expects negative reactions. "It is possible there will be difficulties on the road ahead," he said.

People's fear of the project reflects the hysteria toward Baptists that has run rampant in the media and political circles since shortly after the country shook off communism. Bulgarian Baptists enjoyed the fruits of rapid growth and response to the gospel for a time, but things slowed down two years ago as result of negative rumors about them.

Baptists have tried to establish themselves as historically grounded in Bulgaria along with other legitimate evangelical groups, pointing to their presence predating communism. They also have emphasized their stance for the individual's right to choose his or her own religion.

Still, stories continue to circulate against Baptists, who have had no success in publicly replying to their accusers, Angelov said. One such story, run in a reputable newspaper, was published with the headline, "Baptists Eat Babies for Breakfast."

Under communism, Bulgarian Baptist membership had been reduced to less than 1,000 believers because of imprisonments and political disappearances.

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Foreign Mission Board missionary Stanley Crabb of European Baptist Press Service contributed to this story.

Fall claims BSU student
during trip to Uzbekistan

Baptist Press
7/21/95

TASHKENT, Uzbekistan (BP)--Bradley Holmes, a General Baptist cultural exchange student with Focus International, died July 17 when he fell from outside the window of his fourth-floor apartment near the University of World Languages in Tashkent, Uzbekistan.

Holmes, 22, a member of the Baptist Student Union at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, fell late that night when he climbed out a fourth-floor stairwell window and attempted to reach his nearby apartment window, local police said.

Focus International, a Wichita, Kan.,-based organization, specializes in recruiting university students for cultural exchanges overseas.

Police said Holmes apparently decided to try the climb when he could not, or did not want to, wake an American student sleeping in the apartment.

Local authorities base their explanation, in part, on a hand print made by Holmes on the outside of the apartment window. At this time, local police have ruled the incident as an accidental death.

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Holmes, from Hershey, Neb., was part of a nine-student exchange group that had been visiting the University of World Languages since June 18. The group was scheduled to return to the United States July 29.

"I was proud to have Brad as a part of our summer team," said John Brooks, executive director of Focus International. "He exemplified the kind of student that we believe will make a difference in our world."

While in Tashkent, Holmes and the other students in his team tried to give Uzbek university students glimpses of American lifestyles by sharing about holidays, family and university life, Brooks explained. Students from both cultures also helped each other with foreign language phrases and expressions.

Holmes recently graduated from the University of Nebraska, where he majored in social sciences in secondary education. He planned to begin graduate school this fall.

"He was such an upbeat person," recalled Holmes' hometown pastor, Wayne Fritzingler, of Hershey Baptist Church, a Baptist General Conference church. "Brad was in my office just a few days before his trip and he was so excited about going. For a time, it looked like he wasn't going to be able to go, but toward the end, everything came together. Brad took this as a confirmation that he was to go on this trip.

"I remember saying to my wife that it's hard to believe that there are kids as nice and good as Brad. He had a smile that would melt your heart and he really understood his relationship to the Lord. We will miss him dearly," he said.

Fritzingler contacted Holmes' parents, Charlie and Joyce Holmes, who were traveling in California at the time of their son's death, and Holmes' two older sisters.

The family is working on the details of returning the body to the United States and planning services, which at this time are to be held in Hershey, said Fritzingler.

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Williams College trustees
elect Swaim as president

Baptist Press
7/21/95

WALNUT RIDGE, Ark. (BP)--Jerol Swaim, interim president of Williams Baptist College since March, has been given the job on a permanent basis. Williams' board of trustees voted unanimously July 20 to make Swaim WBC's fifth president.

"I am humbled by the actions of the presidential search committee and the board of trustees, and I am extremely grateful. I pray that I can be the leader this noble institution deserves," Swaim, 56, said.

The new president is a veteran administrator and instructor at Williams, having worked for the college 31 years. He began in the classroom in 1964, teaching history and political science at what was then Southern Baptist College.

He was promoted to academic dean in 1973, as well as vice president for academic affairs soon thereafter. Executive vice president was added to his titles in 1989. Along the way, he has twice served as interim president.

Williams has made advances on a number of academic fronts during Swaim's tenure as dean. Most notable was WBC's move from junior college to four-year status in 1983. In the dozen years since, Williams has grown to offer 19 baccalaureate degrees, including a comprehensive pre-medicine major added last year.

The new president voiced pride in the faculty he has helped assemble at Williams, calling it the best in the college's history.

Trustees voiced excitement to have Swaim at the helm of WBC. "I am elated," said R.W. Ross of Van Buren, Ark., board president. "I think he is tailor-made for the job. Jerol Swaim, aside from his intellect and affable personality, has two strong spiritual gifts as a helper and as a peacemaker. Those are exactly what Williams needs."

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Ross said he encouraged Swaim to apply for the president's job the last two times it was vacant, in 1991 and 1993. Swaim declined both times. In fact, he never applied nor expressed interest in the position this time around.

George Schroeder of Little Rock, Ark., a trustee who headed the search panel, confirmed the committee had to seek Swaim out. "I think that's in keeping with his natural, humble personality," Schroeder said. "But a lot of his friends and colleagues did encourage us to consider him."

The committee chairman recounted, "We offered the job to Dr. Swaim because of a really strong sense of unity of spirit on the committee. We had a number of good resumes submitted by candidates and by those who wanted to recommend someone. But we knew the advantages of Jerol Swaim's many positive qualities."

The committee made a formal offer to Swaim during a meeting July 6 in Searcy, Ark. Swaim notified the committee July 20 he would allow his name to be presented before the full board of trustees, and a special board meeting was called July 20.

Swaim said in the past he felt he could be of more service to the college as second in command, but that changed after the resignation of Gary Huckaby as president in March. "We had two fine men in the office of president for 18 months apiece. We now have the need for continuity, and I felt I could provide a clear understanding of who we are, whom we serve, our place in Arkansas and our ministry to Arkansas Baptists."

Swaim said he wants to lead the college to make progress in all areas, but noted the institution should be careful to maintain its identity. "We are a small, Christian, liberal arts college, and a very good one, I think. That is what we are and what we do, and I think any changes we make should be to strengthen ourselves in those characteristics," he said.

Among his list of priorities is construction of additional dormitories to allow for growth of the resident student population and renovation of the Community of Science building.

Swaim, a native of Brighton, Tenn., received his bachelor's degree from Union University, Jackson, Tenn.; a master's degree in history at the George Peabody College of Vanderbilt University; and the doctor of education from the University of Memphis.

Swaim and his wife Virginia have two grown daughters, Leigh and Leslie, both of Little Rock.

Williams Baptist College was founded by H.E. Williams as Southern Baptist College in 1941. The name of the college was changed in his honor in 1991, during the college's golden anniversary celebration. Total fall enrollment at Williams is typically around 600 students.

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Woman prison chaplain buoyed
by Southern Baptist resources

By Charles Willis

Baptist Press
7/21/95

GLORIETA, N.M. (BP)--Being black, a woman and a chaplain employed by the Federal Bureau of Prisons combine to make Katheryn Browder a rarity, she acknowledges.

Only a few other chaplains fit her description, Browder observed while participating in Black Church Leadership Conference at Glorieta (N.M.) Baptist Conference Center.

And if she has learned anything in 23 years of working in jails and prisons it is that prisoners are not just in need of sermons. They want messages and responses that are real.

Browder, a Southern Baptist chaplain endorsed by the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, easily captures the attention of women sentenced to the Federal Prison Camp in Bryan, Texas.

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Despite the variety of faith groups represented among the 500-plus women to whom Browder relates, the last few years of the seven she has spent at Bryan have been more successful than others because of what she calls "real" Southern Baptist resources.

"We all hurt; we have problems," said Browder, a native of Kentucky and graduate of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville. "God means for me to have the same love for others that he has for me, not only in forgiveness, but in allowing me to be me."

Browder said Baptist Sunday School Board products, such as "MasterLife," "Experiencing God," "Search for Significance" and "Making Peace with Your Past," have proved invaluable in counseling on issues related to co-dependency and self-worth.

People assigned to the minimum-security prison camp at Bryan most often have been convicted of drug-related crimes or financial crimes, such as tax evasion or embezzlement. Many of the women have college degrees, so approaching them on a suitable educational level is important, she said.

The first time Browder heard of Experiencing God was when members of First Baptist Church, Wellington, Texas, called and offered to teach the book to inmates. After 12 weekends of classes, 75 women graduated from the course.

Browder has used the BSSB-produced survival kits for new Christians extensively, and said she is excited over the prospect of beginning a class using "The Mind of Christ" soon.

She testifies to the value of such classes based on the personal growth she sees among prisoners who participate. She sees women leave the prison with a new outlook on themselves and life, and many follow up with letters thanking her for the classes. She has been aware that many also discuss with their husbands what they are learning.

Most importantly, in Browder's estimation, "I don't see them coming back to prison."

She said counseling people in prison has led her to realize many are there because of social problems, often a lack of love.

One prison warden once questioned how Browder could get prisoners in certain cell areas to attend chapel because, as the warden observed, "they never go to chapel."

Browder knew the answer. "If I care, I've got 'em," she said, grinning broadly. "We don't all look alike, and we don't have to think alike. What I bring is a sense of who I am and who I belong to. What people want is that love and the feeling that I am real."

Black Church Leadership Conference at Glorieta, July 17-21, was sponsored by black church development of the BSSB, black church relations of the Foreign Mission Board, black evangelism at the HMB and Woman's Missionary Union.

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Brotherhood team finds a home
in Kentucky 'Mountain Outreach' By Beth Wyatt

Baptist Press
7/21/95

WILLIAMSBURG, Ky. (BP)--It has been 10 years since members of the Cleary Baptist Church's Brotherhood in Florence, Miss., searched Royal Ambassador magazines and mission lists for a construction project, selecting the Mountain Outreach Program at Cumberland College in Williamsburg, Ky.

"We planned to go to Utah in 1985," John Thornton recounts, "but found the Mountain Outreach program met with the criteria to satisfy our out-of-state mission desires."

Since that first trip in 1985, the Brotherhood group has made the 1,000-mile round trip to Kentucky seven of 10 years. They come and spend a week, staying in a local motel and, until this year, eating in fast food spots. This year they used Main Street Baptist Church's facilities to prepare and serve their meals.

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The group brought a \$2,000 donation for materials for a house for a Whitley County, Ky., family, and worked 16-hour days to completely build one house from the floor joists and aid in the finishing of a second home. Over the years various contributions, other than house construction, have been made, including the donation of a van to the program.

"The blessings of working with families and seeing their joys cannot be described," Thornton states. "So much is being missed by church members throughout our convention when we limit what we do for missions." Thornton says no recognition is wanted from the dedicated men, but they do hope others will see a need to reach out to participate in the many mission opportunities offered throughout the Southern Baptist Convention.

Cleary's Brotherhood team is comprised of three carpenters, an electrician, a paramedic, a city worker and a varied collection of businessmen.

In addition to the Williamsburg mission program, Cleary's Brotherhood added an additional 13,000 square feet to the Cleary church building during 1993-94 and has done roofing and maintenance for windows for the congregation, along with working on churches in Mississippi and Alabama in painting and repair projects.

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Wyatt is director of Cumberland College's public information office. (BP) photo available upon request from the college.

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