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Baptist man wins settlement
from Wal-Mart over Sunday work By Tim Palmer

Baptist Press
8/29/95

BOLIVAR, Mo. (BP)--Scott Hamby hopes his victory in a lawsuit against the nation's largest retailer will encourage Christians to stand up for their beliefs in all aspects of life. In recent years, the 23-year-old said, Christians "have kind of become known as pushovers."

Because Hamby acted on his convictions, Wal-Mart Stores Inc. is under a court order to train the managers of its 2,200 stores to avoid religious discrimination against employees. The Wall Street Journal predicted the outcome of the Hamby case "could have far-reaching implications for other companies with weekend staffing needs that conflict with workers' religious practices."

Hamby and his wife, Stacey, are members of Southern Hills Baptist Church, Bolivar, Mo. He is a 1994 graduate of Southwest Baptist University, Bolivar, with a bachelor's degree in theology.

In spring 1993, Hamby was working part-time in the electronics department of the Bolivar Wal-Mart when the county's repeal of Missouri's "blue laws" allowed the store to open for business on Sundays. Although he told his supervisors he did not want to work on Sundays for religious reasons, Hamby recounted, he was put on the schedule to work the first Sunday the store opened.

Hamby said his supervisor later showed him a written document from a district manager stating every employee must be available to work Sundays, with no exceptions. "At that time, I didn't know the legal ramifications of what was being put in front of me," Hamby said. "I just knew it was wrong."

By then, Hamby said, he had worked several Sundays and was feeling troubled about it. "That's when the stresses really set in. I knew that I was going to have to choose God and my convictions, or choose my job."

Hamby's next step was to offer -- "against my convictions" -- to work one Sunday a month to keep his job. He said his supervisor verbally agreed to the arrangement, but then he was scheduled a second Sunday the same month.

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The person doing the scheduling told him she was unaware of any such agreement, Hamby said, and she later testified the manager had told her, "Schedule Scott on Sunday until he quits."

Subsequent meetings with the manager failed to remedy the situation, Hamby said, and by the end of the summer, "The stress level was just too much." After discussing the situation with his wife, his pastor and others, Hamby realized he had been compromising his convictions.

When he went to tell the manager he no longer could work under those conditions, Hamby said, "He conveyed to me very clearly that there was nothing I was going to be able to do to Wal-Mart."

In November 1993 Hamby filed suit against Wal-Mart Stores, Inc. His lawyer, Jay Kirksey of Bolivar, asked for \$5 million in damages. At the time, Hamby said, he didn't realize any punitive damages were involved. "All I wanted to do was stop Wal-Mart."

The settlement Hamby reached with Wal-Mart Stores July 28 called for the company to pay Hamby an undisclosed amount for damages. Both parties in the settlement agreed to keep the amount confidential.

Kirksey said the case had the potential for a multi-million-dollar jury verdict against Wal-Mart. "But our purpose was not the money, it was to prevent this from happening to someone else."

Hamby acknowledged some of the people he consulted with while trying to decide whether to sue advised him not to do so. Some Christians have criticized him since the settlement, citing the apostle Paul's injunction in 1 Corinthians 6 against Christians suing their brothers.

His answer: "Wal-Mart is not my brother."

The dismissal order states Wal-Mart Stores, Inc., denies any liability or wrongdoing in the case. Spokeswoman Jane Bockholt said the company agreed to a settlement because its local store manager had made a mistake. "We're human -- we sometimes make mistakes."

Bockholt said the corporation was complying with the settlement agreement by providing training in religious discrimination at its fall merchandise meetings in Kansas City. Wal-Mart considers the training useful for its employees and thus beneficial to customers, she added. "It's just another manner of doing business. For one thing, it's the law; for another thing, it's another way to take care of our people."

The settlement first was reported by the Bolivar Herald-Free Press, where Stacey Hamby is a reporter. The Wall Street Journal carried a report Aug. 22.

Hamby also has been interviewed by National Public Radio and other media. "I think God is going to use this in a lot of ways," he said.

Reporters have asked him if he still shops at Wal-Mart. The answer is yes. "What's life without Wal-Mart?" he asked, chuckling.

Kirksey believes the settlement will have far-reaching impact. Title VII of the federal civil rights laws deals with discrimination on the basis of race, sex or religion, he pointed out, but religious discrimination has received less attention than the other two types. "It looks like this will be the case that will catapult religious discrimination into the public awareness."

The law states if a person has a bona fide religious conviction pertaining to some aspect of work, an employer must reasonably accommodate the employee's needs if it can be done without undue hardship to the employer. Basically that means the employer should use common sense, Kirksey explained. In Hamby's case, for example, there was no need for the store to force Hamby to work Sundays because it had plenty of other employees who were willing to do so.

Kirksey, who specializes in labor law, said typically a worker opposed to working on Sundays for religious reasons is either not hired, is fired or has his or her hours cut. This forces workers to choose between their religious convictions and feeding their families. "Title VII says that doesn't have to occur."

Christians are becoming more active in politics and in public schools, Kirksey noted, and he hopes they will be willing to use the judicial system as well. "If you're a Christian, stand up," he said. "David got Goliath in this one."

Hamby drew a lesson from the experience. "What I've learned is that God will honor our convictions if we stand on biblical principles."

People often look at the court system as bad, Hamby said -- that it represents what is wrong with government and society. "The courts are there to help us. If we use it correctly and have justified means, God will honor that."

Hamby is a certified law enforcement officer. He plans to do police work while serving as a bivocational evangelist.

Baptist religious liberty advocates welcomed the Wal-Mart settlement. "We certainly endorse the principle of strengthening religious liberty in the workplace," said Michael Whitehead, general counsel for the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission. He characterized the outcome of Hamby's case as "a non-legislative move in the right direction."

Legislation to strengthen Title VII's protection of religious liberty has been discussed, Whitehead noted, but the CLC has not taken a position on such a bill. "The atmosphere of accommodating religious employees among lower courts and EEOC (Equal Employment Opportunity Commission) officials seems to be raising the standard on the employer," Whitehead remarked.

Brent Walker, general counsel for the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, said the Work Place Religious Freedom Act would counteract two United States Supreme Court rulings in the late 1980s that served to weaken the religious freedom of employees. The BJCPA supports the legislation, which Walker said would go hand in glove with the Wal-Mart settlement and a settlement involving Dillard Department Stores.

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7-point terms listed
in Wal-Mart settlement

Baptist Press
8/29/95

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (BP)--The order of dismissal in the case of Scott Hamby v. Wal-Mart Stores, Inc., was issued July 28, 1995, in United States District Court, Western District of Missouri, Southern Division, Senior District Judge Russell G. Clark presiding.

Under the settlement, Wal-Mart Stores, Inc., agreed to the following stipulations:

1) There will be a meeting of all Wal-Mart managers in August 1995 that will be conducted in Kansas City, Mo. One of the purposes of that meeting is to provide training for Wal-Mart managers, and there will be a segment of that meeting that will consist of specific training on discrimination matters and a handout will be given to the managers which talks about religious discrimination.

2) All management in charge of hiring and scheduling at new Wal-Mart stores and SuperCenters will be trained in the topic of religious discrimination, starting immediately, and this training also will include all newly promoted district managers.

3) Wal-Mart will prepare a training manual on the topic of scheduling and staffing that will be on computer and will be part of its computer-based learning program.

4) The training manual on scheduling and staffing will have examples of discrimination and will include a discussion of the associates' rights to have their religious beliefs reasonably accommodated by management. The training manual will be completed by the end of 1995 and will then be a part of Wal-Mart's computer-based learning program.

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5) Wal-Mart will have between 30 and 40 regional trainers who will go to Wal-Mart's stores and provide training to assistant managers, support team managers and hourly supervisors. That training will include the laws on discrimination and the associates' rights to have their religious beliefs reasonably accommodated.

6) Wal-Mart's Associates Handbook will include the following language or something substantially similar to it: "Our commitment to equal opportunities for all associates is reinforced by policy and by actions. We do not tolerate discrimination of any kind. Not only is discrimination against our beliefs, it is against the law."

7) Wal-Mart's computer-based learning program to which all associates will have access will refer to Wal-Mart's policy on harassment, which includes a discussion of religious harassment and the procedure available for remedial action.

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CLC's James Smith resigns;
Will Dodson to be recommended

By Bill Merrell

Baptist Press
8/29/95

WASHINGTON (BP)--James A. Smith, Christian Life Commission director of government relations the past six years, has resigned effective Sept. 30 to pursue full-time studies at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Kansas City, Mo., this fall.

Richard Land, CLC executive director, has announced he will recommend William C. Dodson as Smith's successor and as CLC associate general counsel when the CLC board meets Sept. 12.

Dodson, 39, spent eight and a half years as judge for the County Court-At-Law, Lubbock County, Texas, before resigning his position this summer to enter Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Wake Forest, N.C., in preparation for full-time Christian service.

Dodson received his undergraduate degree from Texas Tech University and his law degree from Baylor University. His law career includes service as briefing attorney for the Eleventh Court of Appeals of Texas and as an assistant district attorney.

"The decision to leave the Christian Life Commission has been difficult," said Smith. "I firmly believe God called me to the ministry I have undertaken with the CLC. I believe God has blessed that ministry. The intersection of government, politics, Christianity and biblical ethics is a strategic place. Advocating God's principles to Washington public policy-makers and the media on behalf of Southern Baptists has been for me a unique pleasure and opportunity.

"However, at this point in the life of my family and myself, God is telling me it's time for further preparation for his ministry," Smith said.

Land said of Smith, "We are very sorry to lose Jim. He was our first CLC staff person in Washington. He has given invaluable and sterling leadership to our presence in Washington during his six-plus years of service. Although we hate to lose him, we certainly bow to the Holy Spirit's leadership in his life and we wish him every blessing in his seminary studies. We look forward with excitement and anticipation to the ways that God will use his seminary training to make him even more valuable in kingdom service in the years ahead."

After Smith's announcement, Land began the task of selecting a successor. "Sometimes, even those of us in full-time Christian service are amazed and blessed by the wonderful and mysterious ways in which our Heavenly Father works his will," Land recounted. "On Monday, Aug. 14, I received Jim Smith's letter announcing his intention to resign in order to attend Midwestern Seminary as a full-time student. Within six days, God had worked in a marvelous way to provide a replacement who I believe will have a tremendous and important ministry through the CLC in Washington, D.C."

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Land described how, through mutual friends in the ministry, God brought him and Dodson together for the first time last fall. "At the time, neither of us could have had an inkling of what the Lord was preparing to do in Judge Dodson's life or that of the Christian Life Commission. We have both been humbled by the way in which the Holy Spirit has worked to bring about his will."

Land added, "Both Will and I are absolutely convinced that God is calling him to service with the CLC."

Dodson remarked, "I've had a very strong sense that God wanted me to serve him in the area of Christianity and public policy. For about two years, the Lord has been directing events toward our serving him in full-time Christian service. In the past year, those events began to move very rapidly. God has done wonderful things in preparing my heart and that of my wife to invest our lives in Christian service. Our initial shock when Dr. Land contacted us turned into joy and excitement over the possibility of working in this capacity."

The candidate said, "I have long admired Dr. Land and the work of the CLC and am excited to work together with him and the CLC staff for the Southern Baptist Convention. Our views are consistent with his and those of our Southern Baptist Convention family."

Dodson said of his work goals, "In working with government leaders, I have two hopes: First, that I convey the views of our constituents as clearly and persuasively as possible; and second, I hope that everything I do would reflect the love of Christ. We are called upon to always speak the truth, and always to speak it in love."

Dodson and Denise, his wife of 10 years, have two children, Allison, 7, and Andrew, age 4.

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Education consortium names
first full-time director

By Dan Nicholas

Baptist Press
8/29/95

NORTHBOROUGH, Mass. (BP)--A veteran college administrator from Maryland has been selected to lead the Northeastern Baptist Education Consortium (NeBEC). H. David Flumbaum, executive director of the DACUM Resource Center at Dundalk Community College, Baltimore, is NeBEC's first full-time director, effective Sept. 1.

At a Northborough, Mass., meeting in May, NeBEC's executive committee recommended Flumbaum to the full board. He was "approved unanimously and with enthusiasm," said Ken Lyle, NeBEC chairman and executive director of the Baptist Convention of New England.

Lyle said Flumbaum will solidly establish the consortium's mission strategy for "contextualized" theological education for the next century.

The New England convention is one of four Southern Baptist state conventions partnering to make NeBEC a reality. The others are the Baptist Convention of New York, the Baptist Convention of Pennsylvania/South Jersey and the Baptist Convention of Maryland/Delaware.

"Of all the blessings of God to NeBEC, none surpasses the employment of Dave Flumbaum. Under Dave's leadership, NeBEC will continue to provide quality contextualized ministry training and do so with new creativity, sensitivity and wisdom," said Lyle.

Charles Barnes, executive director of the Baptist Convention of Maryland/Delaware, agreed: "David has exceptional conceptual, relational and process skills that allow him a comfort zone with all kinds of people. I have never known a person who has blended these skills so well."

At Dundalk Community College, Flumbaum provided administrative leadership for the DACUM curriculum and instructional design center. Before being named center director in 1993, he was associate dean of academic support services and chairperson of the college's counseling and reading division.

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Before being employed at Dundalk in 1972, Flumbaum was director of counseling at Essex Community College and a counselor at K nwood Senior High School, both in Baltimore. He also taught public school in Kentucky.

Flumbaum has also been active as a denominational and church leader. He has served as a member of the Southern Baptist Committee on Committees and as president of the Baptist Convention of Maryland/Delaware.

Flumbaum holds a master of education degree in counseling from the University of Illinois, Urbana, which he received in 1963. He graduated from Georgetown (Ky.) College in 1960 and studied counseling at Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore.

He and his wife, Alice, are the parents of two grown children, Rebecca Lowery and David R. Flumbaum.

"The excitement of so many people for the NeBEC initiative has convinced me that God is at work among us," Flumbaum said after being selected as the consortium's director. "It has been humbling for me to see how God has given me a chance to serve him, the four sponsoring state conventions and the millions of people God loves throughout the northeastern United States.

"The needs are great and the challenge is overwhelming, but God is in control. The focus of my work will be on people, on building relationships that make a difference with both those in need, and those helping meet the needs. I just want to please my Lord," he said.

As NeBEC's administrative officer, Flumbaum will work with committees and ministry partners to manage and lead an array of practical theological education programs, including seminars, conferences, seminary classes, small-group studies, ethnic ministry training, research projects and tutoring.

He also will build relationships for NeBEC, represent the partnership at meetings and conventions, establish a "service-oriented ministry culture," publicize and evaluate the consortium's programs and regional centers, supervise personnel and oversee finances.

The Northeast Baptist School of Ministry (NeBSM), a NeBEC program in partnership with Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky., offers theological education degrees for some 160 students at centers in suburban Boston, New York City, Pittsburgh, Baltimore and Silver Springs, Md. The Silver Springs program is taught in the Korean language. A sixth NeBSM center will open in September in Harrisburg, Pa., according to NeBSM director Andrew Y. Lee.

Doran C. McCarty retired in December as the part-time NeBEC coordinator and as director of the Southern Baptist Convention's Seminary Extension Division, Nashville, Tenn.

Beyond the four Baptist state conventions which make up NeBEC, the consortium partners with Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board and the Southern Baptist Seminary Extension Division.

For additional information about programs or a brochure, write NeBEC, c/o Baptist Convention of New England, 5 Oak Avenue, Northborough, MA 01532.

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(BP) photo available upon request from the New England Baptist newsjournal.

Join God or be left behind,
Jericho participants told

By Mark Kelly

Baptist Press
8/29/95

RIDGECREST, N.C. (BP)--Southern Baptists must lay aside their "busyness" and seek God's heart for a lost world or be left out of one of the greatest movements of God's Spirit in human history, Henry Blackaby said at two annual Jericho missions festivals in August.

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Blackaby, author of "Experiencing God" and "Fresh Encounter" materials, was featured at the conferences -- July 29-Aug. 4 at Glorieta (N.M.) Baptist Conference Center and Aug. 12-18 at Ridgecrest (N.C.) Baptist Conference Center. The festivals, sponsored by five national Southern Baptist agencies, provide firsthand experience with an array of missions opportunities.

Under the theme, "Experiencing God through Missions," Jericho offered hands-on activities, nuts-and-bolts missions conferences, one-on-one interaction with home and foreign missionaries, Bible study and worship. The festivals drew 1,647 registrants at Glorieta and 1,329 at Ridgecrest and recorded 110 spiritual decisions -- 81 for home or foreign missions.

In morning Bible studies and evening worship wrap-ups, Blackaby challenged Baptists to focus on God and watch for ministry opportunities he gives daily.

Too many Christians are "radically self-centered," asking God to bless what they choose to do, Blackaby said. Preoccupied with their own agenda instead of God's, they often dismiss God's opportunities as interruptions.

"We're in the midst of one of the greatest movements of God's Spirit in human history," he said, ticking off worldwide renewal and revival examples. "But you can never join God on mission if you don't know what he's doing."

Knowing God's will means knowing God well, but many Christians don't spend enough time in prayer and Bible study to know God's love for them and a lost world, Blackaby said. Those who do encounter God's overwhelming love must then decide to lay aside their pursuits and follow God in trusting obedience.

"The key isn't whether God will be with you, but whether you'll be with him," Blackaby said. "You can't say to God, 'I love you but I'm having trouble obeying you.' God's blessing follows your obedience."

The crisis comes when Christians know what God wants them to do and must decide whether to do it, he said.

"Like Abraham, God asks us to put our most precious possession on the altar. Many raise the knife, only to say, 'I can't do it,'" Blackaby said. "And then God says, 'I'll have to find someone who can.'"

Jericho participants at Ridgecrest prayed for missionaries appointed for national and international service. The Foreign Mission Board appointed 77 missionaries for overseas service -- the largest group since May 1983, when 94 were appointed. Sixteen young people were commissioned for the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board's US-2 program that posts recent college graduates to two-year mission assignments in the United States.

Jericho festivals seek to break down barriers keeping Southern Baptists from joining God's mission by giving them firsthand experience and a challenge to get involved, said publicity chairman Marshall Walker. As the walls of ancient Jericho fell before the Israelites, so barriers to missions involvement tumble down as people have a fresh encounter with God, he said.

Activities at Jericho included a Missions Encounter with about 100 home and foreign missionaries, 56 booths exploring virtually every type of mission ministry and 70 conferences on a variety of missions-related topics.

Worship experiences were led by a husband-wife team, actor, playwright and conference leader Ragan Courtney and award-winning musician Cynthia Clawson. "The Company," a drama troupe from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas, assisted in theme interpretations.

Jericho festivals for 1996 are scheduled for June 29-July 5 at Ridgecrest and July 27-Aug. 2 at Glorieta. For a free packet containing information about speakers and conferences, call 1-800-866-3621.

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(BP) photos (two horizontals and one vertical) mailed to state Baptist newspapers 8/29/95 by Richmond bureau of Baptist Press. Outlines available on SBCNet News Room.

Say 'Send me,' not 'I can't,'
Lewis tells US-2 appointees

By Mark Kelly

RIDGECREST, N.C. (BP)--To the strains of "We've a Story to Tell to the Nations," 50 bright banners -- one for each state where Southern Baptists witness to their nation -- smartly flowed in neat lines down the aisles.

On their heels, as the music slipped into a gloomy minor key, 10 gray flags wandered in disarray to the stage, bearing somber witness to millions of Americans who have not yet heard good news of new life in Jesus Christ.

The flags represent both the home missions challenges and successes that face Southern Baptists, Larry Lewis said at the Jericho missions festival held Aug. 12-18 at Ridgecrest (N.C.) Baptist Conference Center.

Annual Jericho missions festivals, sponsored by five Southern Baptist agencies, provide firsthand experience with an array of home and foreign missions opportunities at Ridgecrest and Glorieta (N.M.) Baptist conference centers.

The crowd in Ridgecrest's Spilman Auditorium Aug. 13 had gathered to commission 16 young people to two years' missions service through the Home Mission Board's US-2 program.

Southern Baptists can rejoice that they witness and minister in 106 languages across the United States, said Lewis, HMB president. The sobering truth, however, is the country is home to more than 400 language groups and 400 counties are without a Southern Baptist witness, he said.

"Swarms of people live in government housing projects, mobile home parks, ethnic communities and high-rise apartment buildings" in need of the gospel, Lewis said. "Experiencing God through missions is finding the door God is holding open and stepping through it with the gospel."

The biblical Great Commission mandate to make disciples of all people groups is based on Jesus' authority as Lord and carries his promise to provide strength for the task, Lewis said.

"We have no right to say, 'I won't,' because Jesus is Lord," Lewis declared. "We dare not say, 'I can't,' because God is all the resource you need.

"Jesus says, 'Lift up your eyes and look on the fields that are white for harvest,'" he said. "Don't say, 'I can't' or 'I won't' or 'later.' Say, 'Here I am, Lord; send me.'"

To the new US-2 missionaries, Lewis said: "Hear God say, 'I'm going with you, no matter where you go.' He will lead you by his own hand."

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Jericho festivals a dream
come true for intercessor

By Mark Kelly

Baptist Press
8/29/95

RIDGECREST, N.C. (BP)--If God wants you to pray for missionaries, a Jericho missions festival is too good an opportunity to pass up.

That's the opinion of David Forsyth, a member of First Baptist Church, Suitland, Md., who has attended at least one of Southern Baptists' two annual missions festivals every year since they began in 1989. For the past two years he has attended both festivals.

Forsyth, who conducts research based on satellite data for the National Environmental Satellite Data Information Service, felt the need to pray for missionaries in 1983 while studying the MasterLife discipl ship course.

"God called me into prayer for missionaries," Forsyth said as he thumbed through a notebook -- heavily taped at the spine to hold it together -- that contains page after page of missionary names. "I get up early every day and pray for them for an hour."

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Forsyth likes the idea of the J rich festivals.

"There's something for everyone here," he said. "You get to see all the ways Southern Baptists do (home and foreign) missions. I can meet face-to-face the missionaries I've been praying for and meet others to add to the list. After I've talked to them, I know better how to pray for them."

The Jericho festivals, sponsored by five Southern Baptist agencies, seek to break down barriers to involvement by giving people firsthand missions knowledge and experience, including opportunities to meet about 100 home and foreign missionaries. Each year one festival each is held at Glorieta (N.M.) and Ridgecrest (N.C.) Baptist conference centers.

Forsyth began attending the North Carolina festival in 1989. When he realized two years ago that a different set of missionaries come to the New Mexico festival, he started attending that one as well.

"Jericho is a great place to come and meet the missionaries you've been praying for," he said. "You can talk to them about how they're taking the word of Christ all over the world."

"I wouldn't miss it."

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(BP) photo (horizontal) mailed to state Baptist newspapers 8/29/95 by Richmond bureau of Baptist Press. Cutline available on SBCNet News Room.

'God at work all around you,'
Willis tells Jericho group

By Mark Kelly

Baptist Press
8/29/95

RIDGECREST, N.C. (BP)--Many Christians just can't see that God is at work all around them every day, so they leave him out of their everyday lives, Avery Willis told a conference group at a Jericho missions festival.

"The Biblical Basis of Missions" was one of 70 conferences offered participants in the Jericho festivals at Glorieta (N.M.) and Ridgecrest (N.C.) Baptist conference centers. The festivals seek to break down barriers keeping Southern Baptists from joining God's mission by giving them firsthand experience and a challenge to get involved.

Almost 3,000 people registered for the two conferences, held July 29-Aug. 4 at Glorieta and Aug. 12-18 at Ridgecrest.

"The average Christian doesn't see God at work around him and concludes God only shows up at church on Sunday," said Willis, Foreign Mission Board senior vice president and author of the MasterLife discipleship materials. "He doesn't see how God relates to his workaday world and to his family, finances and relationships."

Yet the Scriptures teach both that God constantly works to restore people's broken relationship with himself and that he intends for his people to join him in that mission, Willis said.

"God is at work all around you every day, all the time. He wants to involve you in his work," Willis said. "The problem is that we're often so busy with our own work that we miss out on God's work. We think God's appointments are interruptions."

Even Jesus said he couldn't do or say anything on his own, Willis noted. The secret of his power was time spent with God in prayer and the Scriptures.

"Prayer gave Jesus insight into what his Father wanted to do," Willis said. "He could watch to see where God was working and join in with him."

"When you have spent enough time with God to have that kind of intimate relationship with him, you'll learn to recognize the situations God puts you in and be able to join him in his work."

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**Building furniture opens door
to men's missions involvement**

By Mark Kelly

RIDGECREST, N.C. (BP)--The whine of a table saw and the smell of sawdust fill the tent pitched on the front parking lot at Ridgecrest Baptist Conference Center near Asheville, N.C.

Inside, a dozen men or so lean intently over their work benches -- measuring, remeasuring, cutting, piecing, nailing, staining -- as they concentrate on the task at hand: building furniture for a Choctaw Indian mission congregation in Mississippi.

The crew consists of men attending the Jericho missions festival held each year at Ridgecrest. An identical festival is held each year at Glorieta (N.M.) Baptist Conference Center. The festivals seek to break down barriers to missions involvement by giving people hands-on missions experiences.

It doesn't get any more hands-on than this.

"Some men come with their wives to a conference like this and dread sitting through the seminars and workshops," said crew foreman M.B. Howard, a Mission Service Corps volunteer who coordinates mission construction projects for the Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission.

"A lot of them are excited to get here and find something like this they can get their hands on."

Howard sets up shop at Baptist meetings like Jericho and invites men to pitch in. His 14-foot trailer, with its "Carpenter Shop" logo emblazoned on the side, carries all the tools he needs. The Ridgecrest project will benefit Calvary Indian Baptist Church of Union, Miss., which ministers in the shadow of a Choctaw casino on the nearby reservation.

Furniture building gets more men involved and broadens the value of volunteer construction efforts that have long benefited mission congregations in the United States and overseas. A men's group buys about \$2,000 worth of material and provides a volunteer team. Howard and other experienced woodworkers give guidance. The team builds pews, a pulpit, a communion table and other furnishings and often installs them at the mission site.

Working with their hands gets many men over the initial barriers to missions involvement, said Howard, a retired mail carrier from Covington, Tenn., who gave his life to volunteer missions 10 years ago.

"Some men are scared to death at the thought of knocking on a door and asking someone about their relationship with Jesus," he said. "In a construction project, they can do what they know how to do and someone can ask why they're doing it. That's gives them a chance to share about Christ.

"Suddenly construction becomes evangelism."

The Carpenter Shop is available to churches and associations interested in a weeklong missions project. The trailer tours the western United States in January and February, the midsection of the country in March and April and the eastern states in May and June. The sequence repeats the next six months.

For more information about the Carpenter Shop, contact the Adults in Missions department of the Brotherhood Commission at (901) 272-2461.

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'Be quiet, listen to God,'
prayer seminar leader says

By Mark Kelly

RIDGECREST, N.C. (BP)--Many people's prayers are like a one-sided telephone conversation, Doug Beggs believes.

"We talk and talk and God can't get a word in edgewise," said Beggs, who led a conference on "Developing Your Personal Prayer Life" during the Jericho missions festivals at Glorieta, N.M., and Ridgecrest, N.C., in August. "We spend our prayer time telling God what's wrong and never stop to listen to him tell us what he's doing."

In fact, God gives us clues every day about his work in the world, clues most of us miss, said Beggs, vice president for program services at the Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission.

"You read in the newspaper about inflation in another country," he said. "Do you stop and pray about your missions giving? You see refugees on TV. Do you stop and pray for your missionaries ministering in that country?"

A new understanding about the importance and power of prayer is dawning among Southern Baptists, Beggs said.

"Prayer lets you effect change in places you can't go," he said. "With the development of prayer walks (on which Christians pray as they tour mission sites), prayer has become a significant missions strategy," he said.

"No nation is closed to the gospel," Beggs said. "That's a lie of Satan.

"A country can keep a missionary out, but no one can keep God from working, and no one can keep intercessors from praying."

The prayer workshop was one of about 70 seminars offered during the Jericho festivals, held July 29-Aug. 4 at Glorieta Baptist Conference Center and Aug. 12-18 at Ridgecrest Baptist Conference Center. Jericho seeks to break down barriers that keep Southern Baptists from missions involvement.

Conference topics ranged from "Balloon Sculpturing" to "HIV/AIDS: A Church's Response" and from "How to Minister in Your Place of Employment" to "What's New in WMU."

Jericho participants also explored the wide array of Southern Baptist missions opportunities in a 56-booth missions fair.

A "Missions Encounter" allowed visitors to meet about 100 home and foreign missionaries and hear about their work, see artifacts and taste food from different cultures.

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