

(BP)

BAPTIST PRESS

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

NATIONAL OFFICE

SBC Executive Committee
901 Commerce #750
Nashville, Tennessee 37203
(615) 244-2355
Herb Hollinger, Vice President
Fax (615) 742-8919
CompuServe ID# 70420,17

BUREAUS

ATLANTA Martin King, Chief, 1350 Spring St., N.W., Atlanta, Ga. 30367, Telephone (404) 898-7522
DALLAS Thomas J. Brannon, Chief, 333 N. Washington, Dallas, Texas 75246-1798, Telephone (214) 828-5232
NASHVILLE 127 Ninth Ave., N., Nashville, Tenn. 37234, Telephone (615) 251-2300
RICHMOND Robert L. Stanley, Chief, 3806 Monument Ave., Richmond, Va., 23230, Telephone (804) 353-0151
WASHINGTON Tom Strode, Chief, 400 North Capitol St., #594, Washington, D.C. 20001, Telephone (202) 638-3223

September 7, 1995

95-140

TENNESSEE--Southern Baptist leaders respond to National Baptist concerns.
NORTH CAROLINA--Baptist school extends warm hello to Dalai Lama.
ATLANTA--Buddhism's focus is man, not God, HMB resources say.
TEXAS--ACTS programs on Faith and Values to continue for remainder of '95.
TEXAS--RTVC radio programs reach an estimated 410 million.
ARIZONA--Gang member's faith born through unconditional love.
NORTH CAROLINA--Focus on personal growth over finding a spouse, singles told.
NORTH CAROLINA--Teens acting like children may be normal behavior.
NORTH CAROLINA--Conference airs strategies for coping with difficulties.

Southern Baptist leaders respond
to National Baptist concerns

By Bill Merrell

Baptist Press
9/7/95

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Southern Baptist Convention leaders responded Sept. 7 to statements by E. Edward Jones, president of the National Baptist Convention of America, during the group's meeting in Dallas expressing skepticism of the resolution on racial reconciliation adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention in June.

"It sounds good -- really good," Jones was quoted as saying Sept. 4 to a meeting expected to draw 18,000 National Baptists, "but I question the apology as being totally valid. First of all, there's been a whole lot of time since slavery for good Christian people to apologize."

Gary Frost, SBC second vice president and the African American pastor of Rising Star Baptist Church, Youngstown, Ohio, said, "I understand his skepticism. Our Southern Baptist Convention agrees this apology is late in coming, but I am convinced it is sincere and real."

Richard Land, executive director of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission, replied, "We believe it's never too late to do the right thing. This is not the first time Southern Baptists have spoken out against racism. We have consistently and repeatedly done that for more than a half century. What separated the 1995 resolution from earlier statements is its personal nature. Earlier resolutions condemned racism abstractly as wrong and as sin. The 1995 resolution acknowledges the role slavery played in the formation of the Southern Baptist Convention and it apologizes and seeks forgiveness from African Americans for the racism of the past."

Jones also expressed the opinion that the unstated purpose for the resolution was to enable Southern Baptists to attract members and churches from the African American community.

"What I really think the apology was about was a way to help Southern Baptist grow," Jones was quoted as saying in the Fort Worth (Texas) Star-Telegram. "The fastest-growing part of the Southern Baptist Convention is the black churches in that convention. And the fastest-growing middle class in American is the black middle class. So that might say something to us about why this apology comes forth at this time."

--more--

SOUTHERN BAPTIST HISTORICAL
LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES
Historical Commission, SBC
Nashville, Tennessee

African American congregations make up about 1,900 of the 40,000 churches in the SBC. That number increases by about 120 new churches annually, according to Willie T. McPherson, director of the Home Mission Board black church extension department.

African American churches, while not the fastest-growing ethnic group in the SBC according to HMB statistics, increased by 52 percent from 1988-93, from 1,067 to 1,627 churches, during the latest five-year period for which a range of ethnic statistics are available.

Korean Southern Baptist churches posted the biggest increase, 97 percent, from 423 to 835 churches from 1988-93. When counted with other Asian churches, Asian churches increased 55 percent, from 1,161 to 1,805.

Hispanic churches, meanwhile, increased by 89 percent, from 2,550 to 3,487 congregations.

McPherson said the HMB does not attempt to get churches to change their denominational affiliation.

"Most black churches which join with the Southern Baptist Convention are independent churches not aligned with any denomination," McPherson said. "At least 50 to 60 percent of predominantly black churches which join with Southern Baptists are dually aligned -- they work with some other denomination in addition to Southern Baptists. It has never been the method of the SBC to recruit churches already aligned with other denominations."

Said Land, "I can only say that if Rev. Jones and the others who are questioning the motivation had been in the meetings leading up to the resolution and had they been in the arena as the spirit of reconciliation and healing swept through the throng assembled there as the resolution was overwhelmingly approved, they would come to a different conclusion than some have drawn."

Saying Southern Baptists' purpose is not hidden, Land said, "Southern Baptists' motivation is evangelization. We are called upon by Scripture to evangelize all those who do not know Christ with the great good news of the gospel and to disciple believers in the faith. The Great Commission requires us to preach the gospel to everyone regardless of ethnicity. We believe the gospel of Jesus Christ is color-blind."

Land's response to the idea that the resolution was a covert method of proselytizing African Americans was, "Southern Baptists have no interest in 'sheep stealing.' We certainly don't apologize for our belief that the Southern Baptist program for evangelization and discipleship is the best available anywhere for growing and discipling New Testament churches. We fervently believe in the Baptist concept of individual and congregational autonomy. If National Baptist individuals and National Baptist congregations feel welcome and accepted in Southern Baptist life and conclude that the Southern Baptist Convention has programs which enable them more effectively to build their churches and strengthen their members, we affirm and respect their right to affiliate with the Southern Baptist Convention."

"I'm unclear as to what Rev. Jones would have us do," Land continued. "Would he have us tell his fellow National Baptist brothers and sisters that they cannot join the Southern Baptist Convention? Would he have us tell them that they can't use our materials? Would he have us say to gifted young men and women who apply to work in Southern Baptist agencies that we won't hire them? Would he have us tell them they are unwelcome in our fellowship?"

Frost said, "We as Christian people need to be pursuing unity in the Lord. My hope has been that this resolution would serve as a catalyst to promote our coming together to pray, and to strategize how we may reach the lost people of our nation. The highest priority for the church is not culture, it is Christ. Our individual cultures are important, but they are not the most important things. My prayer is that all those who know Jesus Christ could coordinate our efforts in order that we may see the Spirit of the Lord sweep this land."

McPherson pointed out the work of the Lord requires all Christians to stay focused on the need for evangelism and building each other up. "I'm hoping and praying that we can come together as Christians. It is the ploy of the devil to keep Christian brothers separated."

Said Land, "Our interest and desire from the very beginning was to do the right thing, the thing that we felt the Lord would be pleased with. Southern Baptists offered our confession and apology in the spirit of good will, and we continue to maintain that spirit. We commend our brethren in the National Baptist Convention as they reach out to others in the name of the Lord."

--30--

Baptist school extends
warm hello to Dalai Lama

By Dwayne Hastings

Baptist Press
9/7/95

WINGATE, N.C. (BP)--In his first stop on a 10-day tour of five U.S. cities, the exiled leader of the country of Tibet began his trek in the heart of the Carolinas, speaking at Wingate University Sept. 5. The Dalai Lama, who is revered as God-king by more than 6 million Tibetan Buddhists, was accompanied to Wingate, a university affiliated with the North Carolina Baptist Convention, by U.S. Senator Jesse Helms.

The 60-year-old Dalai Lama, who was granted temporal powers over Tibet at age 16, is visiting the United States to gain support for the Tibetan people and their right to political self-determination. The country has been occupied by the People's Republic of China since 1959 when communist troops moved into the Tibetan capital, Lhasa, to quash a pro-independence movement there.

The recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1989, the Dalai Lama told the Wingate, N.C., audience the Tibetan issue has "truth" on its side, yet he warned "time is running out." For nearly 40 years, he said, he has been seeking the "middle way," a negotiated settlement with the Chinese, but to no avail.

With diplomatic savvy, the Dalai Lama said while Tibet is a "small country far from the United States and ... has no oil money," it still deserves the support of the United States. China is the larger country, he said, but noted it is only the "animal way" that favors the stronger over the weaker.

Speaking from his Buddhist faith, the Dalai Lama stressed, "It is my fundamental belief that basic human nature is gentleness and compassion. Every human being has the potential to create happiness. It is wrong to believe our nature is negative and that the future is without much hope."

No problem is too big, he continued. "It is always possible to overcome problems and suffering. ... I always practice human compassion as much as I can because it is at the root of all other good qualities."

Bemoaning the violence in society, the Dalai Lama said it is indicative of a deeper "moral crisis" in society. He called on people of different faiths to join together to confront this failure in human values, to give "sufficient attention to our inner qualities."

"We can work together. We can develop genuine mutual respect even among different religious traditions," he continued. "This is very important to promote genuine harmony"

Helms, a member of Hayes-Barton Baptist Church in Raleigh, N.C., introduced the Dalai Lama, who claims to be the reincarnation of each of the previous 13 Dalai Lamas of Tibet, saying, "As long as there is a breath in me and certainly as long as I am a member of the United States Senate, I am going to defend the principles of this fine and wonderful man and his country."

The visit of the Buddhist leader, considered by many to be a living Buddha, the earthly manifestation of a Tibetan deity, Avalokiteshvara, Bodhisattva of Compassion, prompted some letters of concern to Jerry McGee, president of Wingate University, a school where 45 percent of the student body identifies itself as Baptist.

--more--

Yet McGee said his confidence in Helms' judgment convinced him to allow the Dalai Lama to speak on the school's campus: "As long as it was not going to be a Buddhist religious service or be so political that it would be a problem for some of our folks, we thought it would be a nice thing to do.

"I think any Christian who sat there today and heard what that man said and then left there with a bad feeling needs to get some counseling. I didn't feel like he was imposing his beliefs on anyone there," McGee insisted. "I thought the address had religious overtones, but it was a universal religion; he wasn't just speaking of Buddhism."

In a large way, the Dalai Lama's culture determined his religious affections, McGee said, emphasizing Wingate is not endorsing the Dalai Lama's spiritual convictions. "That's very important to him; that's what his world is about. I respect that. But in no way will I or anyone who teaches here or probably anyone who goes to school here ever believe that same way. In the area of religion there is very little common ground except the universal message of love and compassion."

Phil Roberts, director of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board interfaith witness department, was not pleased with the religious leader's visit to Wingate. "My concern," he said, "is that we are not just having a religious leader as such, but a man who claims the incarnation of deity and who as well claims reincarnation of previous Dalai Lamas."

Prior to the event, Roberts had written both McGee and Helms, asking they disinvite the Dalai Lama, suggesting to host the Dalai Lama implied that the university was promoting both his political ideology and his faith.

"To have him on the campus of a Christian institution implies a certain sense of endorsement They would not have a member of the Ku Klux Klan on the campus because they know there is a measure in which when you have somebody on campus, you do endorse them," Roberts said.

Expressing sympathy for the Dalai Lama's efforts to gain Tibet's freedom from communist oppression, Roberts said, "It's also that the Buddhist regime sees Tibet as a Buddhist kingdom and historically has not allowed for our form and fashion of religious liberty. Tibet is one of the few countries closed to Christian missionaries. It was closed long before the communists took over."

At an auditorium which held 1,500 people, more than 100 were turned away and left to mingle outside with the Union County sheriff's deputies who provided a tight ring of security for the Dalai Lama's address.

While only a handful of the crowd inside appeared to be there for a spiritual experience -- recognizable by the katas, a customary white silk offering scarf, they clutched in their hands -- there was a sense of awe and a reverent hush that swept over the auditorium when the exiled leader of Tibet entered the hall with Helms.

Before he spoke, the Dalai Lama waded into the crowd with Helms and a coterie of North Carolina Highway Patrol troopers at his side. His hands clasped in a prayerful pose before him and slightly bowing from the waist, the Dalai Lama greeted several people near the front of the auditorium before ascending to the stage.

Rosalie Prince Gates, a professor of Asian studies at Meredith College, a Baptist college in Raleigh, was one of the first in line to enter the auditorium. "It's a dream come true for me to be able to see the Dalai Lama himself," she said.

Gates, who has visited Tibetan refugee villages in India, said she was a bit surprised it was Sen. Helms who brought the Dalai Lama to Wingate but saw nothing odd in a Tibetan monk speaking on a traditionally Baptist campus. "Whether it is because it's His Holiness or because who he is personally or whatever forces are at work in the universe, the good person seems to be the same whether he is Buddhist or Baptist," Gates said.

--more--

The comments of Davidson College student Jack Livings seem to capture the view of many who watched as the passionately conservative Helms introduced the Buddhist spiritual leader on the Wingate campus. "It's slightly bizarre, but it's great," Livings said. "It's an incredible thing to do. I'm glad the open-mindedness is there."

Claiming the Dalai Lama represents a truth and a peace that is not antithetical to the Christian faith, Bryns Coleman, professor of religion at Wingate, said his visit was a valuable educational experience for students. "I think it is an eye-opener when students learn that not all folks are white, Southern and Southern Baptist," Coleman said.

Not everyone in Wingate's Austin Auditorium was enamored with the Dalai Lama. Jason Gamble, 17, who told the Charlotte (N.C.) Observer he was raised Southern Baptist, said, "I believe in a basic Christian standpoint, that every person is sinful until they find Christ."

This was not the first time the liberal arts university had hosted a well-known and somewhat controversial speaker. Last year alone, Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas, former NAACP head Benjamin Hooks, Sen. Bob Dole and former U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger addressed Wingate students and faculty.

Nonetheless McGee doesn't anticipate the school to be hosting any other religious leaders anytime soon. "This was probably a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for this institution," McGee said, adding, "I doubt other religious leaders are clearing their calendars to come here."

--30--

**Buddhism's focus is man,
not God, HMB resources say**

By Dwayne Hastings

**Baptist Press
9/7/95**

ATLANTA (BP)--The Dalai Lama is more than an exiled head of state; he is Tibet's religious leader and the head of Tibetan Buddhism, said Phil Roberts, director of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board interfaith witness department.

"Buddhism is a false religion which is incompatible with biblical Christianity," Roberts emphasized. "I suppose you could pretend to be a Christian Buddhist, so to speak, worshiping Jesus and reading the Scriptures as long as in the final analysis you acknowledge the full truthfulness of Tibetan Buddhism and the supremacy of the Dalai Lama."

The current Dalai Lama, 14th in a line of reportedly reincarnated spiritual leaders, was born in 1935 to a peasant family in Takster, Amdo, Eastern Tibet. He was located and recognized by a search party sent out by the Tibetan government as the 14th Dalai Lama when he was 2 years old and was enthroned in 1950 as the Tibetan's powerful neighbor to the south, communist China, rattled the sword.

Finally forced to flee Tibet in 1959 amid the bloodshed brought upon the Tibetan countryside by the advancing Chinese troops, the Dalai Lama established a government-in-exile in Dharamsala, India. China continues to claim the small Asian country, and international human rights groups have charged the Beijing government with large-scale campaigns of ethnic cleansing in Tibet.

While many regard him as the living Buddha, a god-king, this Dalai Lama claims he is simply a human being who chose to be a Buddhist monk. In his autobiography, "Freedom in Exile," the Dalai Lama expressed his belief he was "spiritually connected" to the 13 previous Dalai Lamas and to the Buddha himself.

The HMB interfaith witness department reports there are three primary strands of Buddhism: Theravada, Mahayana and Vajrayana. Each deny the existence of an absolute God, instead advocating a search for enlightenment within themselves.

The founder of this faith, Siddhartha Gautama, called the Buddha, rejected orthodox theistic beliefs because of his inability to reconcile the presence of evil and suffering in the world with the existence of a good and holy God. He lived in northern India near modern Nepal roughly 500 years before the birth of Christ.

--more--

The Dalai Lama is a proponent of the Vajrayana strand, often called Tantrism and known for its embrace of shamanism and the occult in addition to traditional Buddhist beliefs.

Buddhists believe nothing in this life is permanent and that individual selves do not exist, according to HMB interfaith witness assessments of Buddhism. Everything is determined by one's karma, an impersonal law of moral causation, and the goal of life is to break out of the endless cycle of suffering known as reincarnation by entering a "permanent state of pure nonexistence," known as nirvana, HMB studies of Buddhism conclude.

The Buddhist views ignorance and not sin as standing in the way of his salvation. It is this belief that drives the Buddhist monk to develop self-control and meditative practices so he might rise above his awareness of self.

--30--

ACTS programs on Faith and Values
to continue for remainder of '95

By C.C. Risenhoover

Baptist Press
9/7/95

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--The Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission has reached agreement with the Faith and Values channel for ACTS programming to continue on the cable channel through Dec. 31, 1995.

ACTS is the cable television service operated by the RTVC.

"This is a temporary measure," said RTVC President Jack Johnson. "We are still negotiating. As to whether ACTS will continue to play a vital role on the Faith and Values channel, I just don't know."

Johnson, on Aug. 8, said negotiations between ACTS, National Interfaith Cable Coalition (NICC) and Liberty Media were at an impasse.

NICC owns 51 percent of the "Faith and Values" channel and Liberty Media, a subsidiary of TCI (the nation's largest cable operator), owns 49 percent.

Johnson said that more than 11 months ago ACTS received notice that the 1992 agreement with VGI (Vision Group, Inc., also a subsidiary of TCI) would be terminated on June 30, 1995. The agreement provided ACTS eight hours of programming daily on the Faith and Values channel. The other 16 hours each day carried VISN programming. VISN is the cable television programming service of NICC.

Earlier Johnson said negotiations between ACTS, NICC and Liberty Media had been tedious. He also said NICC and Liberty Media were not negotiating in good faith on an agreement that would enable ACTS to at least maintain its equity position and participate as before on the channel.

"We continue to pursue available options," he said, "but I can't comment on what should or should not be done. I can't even say how many options are available. I can only say that whatever decision is made will be made by the trustees of the Radio and Television Commission and then released to the public."

--30--

RTVC radio programs reach
an estimated 410 million

By C.C. Risenhoover

Baptist Press
9/7/95

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--Total estimated worldwide audience per week for radio programs produced by the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission during August was 410 million.

Estimated audience for RTVC-produced radio programs in July was 388 million.

The figures are based on data collected by the RTVC radio distribution department and radio rating services.

--more--

"Radio, obviously, plays a vital role in our media ministry," said Jack Johnson, RTVC president. "I think that role will increase dramatically into the next century. It provides us the opportunity of reaching the entire world with the gospel of Jesus Christ."

Longest-running of the five weekly programs produced by the RTVC is "The Baptist Hour," which airs 406 times each week on 386 stations. It airs in 117 different markets, 20 of the top 50 markets and has an estimated worldwide audience of 49 million.

"Powerline," with an estimated audience of 113 million, is the most listened-to of the five programs. The "Powerline" format is a mix of adult contemporary music from the 1970s, '80s and '90s along with inspirational vignettes. It airs 691 times each week on 624 stations. The program is in 206 different markets and in 38 of the top 50 markets.

"Country Crossroads" is aired by 886 stations a total of 945 times each week. The program, which features the latest in country music, interviews with recording artists and inspirational thoughts, has an estimated worldwide audience of 86 million. It is aired in 209 different markets and 35 of the top 50 markets.

"MasterControl," which uses a magazine format and features interviews with experts on health, finances, self-help, entertainment and travel, is carried by 519 stations and airs 569 times each week. The program has an estimated worldwide audience of 85 million, is aired in 166 different markets and 39 of the top 50 markets.

"On Track," featuring contemporary Christian music, is broadcast on 431 stations and airs 468 times per week. The program airs in 140 different markets, 28 of the top 50 markets and has an estimated worldwide audience of 77 million.

All RTVC-produced radio programs are provided to stations as a public service and are carried without charge to the RTVC.

--30--

Gang member's faith born
through unconditional love

By Karen Merrick

Baptist Press
9/7/95

PHOENIX, Ariz. (BP)--He struggled to catch his breath as he crouched behind a bush, listening as police searched the neighborhood around him. They had spotted him in a stolen Buick, and he'd taken off, jumping over fences and hiding in trees and garbage cans in a frantic attempt to escape.

After three hours of running and hiding, Jesse heard a police helicopter approaching and knew he had to think fast. He scooped up handfuls of cool mud from the base of his sheltering bush and covered himself with it to keep the helicopter's heat sensors from detecting him.

The trick worked. The search moved far beyond his muddy haven, and Jesse grabbed a stolen bicycle and headed for home. He was safe -- for now.

But wherever Jesse went, trouble was bound to follow.

Jesse Marquez, a former client of Arizona Baptist Children's Services, had grown up in a home filled with yelling and physical abuse. His father hit him often, and later his stepfather followed the same pattern. Filled with anger and hatred, Jesse learned to be tough.

"I thought I could beat up the world," he said. In his first fight during high school, he hit another student with a combination lock, and the damage took 20 stitches to repair.

"I thought it was cool at the time," he said. He became part of a gang, then joined his older brother in a car theft ring that exported large numbers of stolen vehicles to Mexico. He carried a gun wherever he went, and his life took on a pattern of stealing and fighting.

Finally, his mother could no longer handle this angry, violent teen-ager, and Jesse was placed in ABCS' Wrangler independent living program.

--more--

The Wrangler program prepares boys in their late teens for life as adults. In the Glendale Wrangler House, boys finish their education, train for jobs and learn practical skills such as cooking, cleaning and preparing budgets.

Jesse entered the program when he was 17, stayed eight months and was impressed by the unconditional love the staff showed to the Wrangler boys.

"No matter what I did to them, no matter what I said to them, they always came to me in love," he said. "They never gave up." He said he believes now that God was giving them patience.

"They showed me how God was working in their life," he said. At the time, however, he wasn't particularly interested in spiritual things.

He left the Wrangler program with an education and a job, but the violence in his life continued.

A few months after beginning life on his own, he was attacked with a baseball bat by rival gang members, resulting in a two-day hospital stay and 30 stitches. His hair was just starting to grow back when he was shot in the back of the head during a fight that erupted at a party.

He was beginning to see the hopelessness of his life. When a stranger began talking to him about Christ at a bus stop, he was finally ready to listen.

"I was a mess," he said. "There was no other way to go." After several months of soul-searching, he prayed for forgiveness and asked God to be part of his life. "I felt so much comfort," he said.

Jesse's life took on a whole new meaning. He dropped his gang friends and joined a men's Bible study group. Now he is part of Redeemed Car Ministry, a Christian group that reaches out to kids in gangs.

"They can relate to me ... because they see that I'm real," he said. "I've been there."

Now, three years after leaving the Wrangler program, he said he can fully appreciate the Wrangler staff's impact on his life. "They're the ones that showed love; they showed how it could be without the violence, without the stealing."

--30--

Reprinted from Footprints, Arizona Baptist Children's Services newsletter.

Focus on personal growth over
finding a spouse, singles told

By Keith Hinson

Baptist Press
9/7/95

RIDGECREST, N.C. (BP)--The key to finding the right spouse is not in seeking the right person but becoming the right person, declared a Single Adult Labor Day Getaway speaker at Ridgecrest (N.C.) Baptist Conference Center over the Labor Day weekend.

"We're so busy looking for the right person when we need to be becoming the right person," said Steve Cretin, director of the ministry and leadership development department in the Baptist Sunday School Board's Bible teaching-reaching division.

Becoming the right person means living a godly life and doing God's will, Cretin noted. "When we're talking about God's will in a dating relationship (and) God's will in the choice of a mate, I think ... we need to look at ... if we are totally and completely committed to him. He'll take care of the rest."

Another key part of becoming the right person is being led by the Holy Spirit, Cretin suggested. "I think the best quality we can build in our lives is the fruit of the Spirit. Basically, we will let God live through us," said Cretin, who recently moved to the BSSB after serving as associate pastor of First Baptist Church, West Monroe, La.

In seeking God's will, Cretin said, Christians should keep certain things in mind. "We need to obey the will already revealed. Here's a book (the Bible) full of it. Don't expect God to show you more than you'll do.

--more--

"Be willing to accept the will of G d. ... God's will is not for ur approval; it's for our obedience. ... He's not going to reveal any more than we're willing to obey," Cr tin said.

How can a Christian know God's will? One way is through Bible study, Cretin noted, adding "we can't find God's will apart from God's Word. God's will never contradicts his Word."

Christians also should look for God's will in prayer, which Cretin called a "tough part of the Christian life;" through a "multiplicity of godly counsel, somebody that knows you;" and in the circumstances of life.

"Did you ever think," Cretin asked the singles about possible future spouses, "that God is waiting for you to become the right person before he puts you together?"

Cretin urged the group to avoid dating non-Christians. "I don't believe in missionary dating, folks," he said. "God loves them as much as he loves us, ... but there's every difference in the world in the direction they're going and the direction we're going."

Another speaker said the qualities that make for a good spouse should be cultivated by singles before marriage.

Dick Purnell, president of Single Life Resources based in Cary, N.C., told conferees there are two kinds of marriage relationships:

-- the insult-for-insult relationship, in which partners intend "to hurt by action or word. It's the small digs. It's the sarcasm. It's the smiles, but the sarcastic remarks, when you're digging at your husband or wife. ... It's one-upmanship. In other words, I'll put you down to raise me up," Purnell said.

Purnell suggested such a marriage may be characterized by two phrases that are "poison phrases" in any relationship: "You always ..." and "You never ..."

"You say those things, (and) you have a fight on your hands, because the person is going to defend it," Purnell said. "Not only is it meaning to hurt, but this relationship is rooted in unforgiving and hardened hearts."

-- the blessing-for-insult relationship. "A blessing is a verbal or concrete action that brings kindness to another person. ... The idea is this: When you are offended by that person, ... you give a blessing. This is what I would call a supernatural relationship, a supernatural response," Purnell stated.

Unmarried people will reap spiritual benefits if they relate to others in this way, Purnell said.

"Even as a single adult by giving blessings to people, you will inherit a blessing yourself," he said. "You will learn what it means to walk with God. Our natural tendency is to insult when we get hurt, but you learn to walk with God, because that's what he does. He gives blessing."

Purnell suggested to conferees that personal fulfillment is not determined by whether they are married. "I've found that marital status has zero to do with your happiness. It is all in your attitude. It is all in the direction of your life," he said.

"The most important thing is not your marital status. It's not even your relationship to each other," he noted. "It's with the Lord Jesus Christ."

Purnell related to the group a quote from Martin Luther: "I do not know what my future holds, but I know who holds my future."

"That's what I would say to you," Purnell said. "Relax, have great relationships, and remember God is in control."

--30--

Teens acting like children
may be normal behavior

By Keith Hinson

Baptist Press
9/7/95

RIDGECREST, N.C. (BP)--Som times teen-agers act like small children -- and that's normal, a speaker told a group of parents during Single Adult Labor Day Getaway, Sept. 1-4, at Ridgecrest (N.C.) Baptist Conference Center.

--more--

Barbara Schiller, director of Single Parent Family Resources in St. Louis, said teens sometimes act like 2- or 3-year-old children who are "getting behind a chair, peeking around a corner, making sure you're still kind of there, but ... they're physically saying, 'I am not you.'"

Schiller said teens are very insecure and say to their parents, "I am not like you and, boy, am I glad." That's normal behavior, said Schiller, who has raised her three children the past several years as a single mother.

For parents who attend church regularly, the teen years can be especially frustrating because many teens "start throwing away God. They start throwing away issues of the church. They don't want to be at church. It's not cool," Schiller said.

The loss of interest in church, along with a desire to be with peers, is why a church's "youth group is such a great place," Schiller noted.

Not only are teens changing spiritually, Schiller said, but physically and emotionally. "The one constant thing you can count on ... in the life of a teen is change," she noted.

Schiller said teens "will argue over everything with you. That is normal behavior. ... Saying things that are unkind -- this is not crisis; this is normal behavior. ...

"You feel literally like you have bruises all over your body. ... It's like they are just determined to have their way. It is like the center of their life is to make you miserable sometimes," she said.

Teens often will try to shut down communication with parents as they give short answers to parental questions and close themselves up in their rooms.

"Please understand that's normal behavior. You'll go up to their room. It's locked -- and you're thinking all the things that a typical parent thinks: drugs, alcohol, ... things that maybe have had nothing to do with your children," Schiller said.

Communication between parents and teens also is hindered by the excessive amount of time most teens spend on the telephone, Schiller said. "If I didn't have call waiting, I'd be in deep trouble," she said, with a chuckle.

Schiller suggested several strategies for parents of teens:

-- Listen to a teen's music with the teen. Like most parents, Schiller said, she has concerns about the lyrics of music played by her children. In her own home, she once heard her son playing a compact disc and asked to listen to it with him. She and her son listened to the entire album together and had a good conversation about it, she said.

Schiller has since repeated the exercise and urged conferees, "Don't be afraid, parents, to enter their world. ... Except for physical harm toward somebody else, allow expressions of feelings. They're going to say things that are really going to shock you -- probably push you into cardiac arrest. ... You've got to listen and be prepared to hear things you don't want to hear."

-- Use "sticky notes" around the house. "Buy a whole slew ... and start utilizing them. Leave notes, put them on the toilet, put them on the sink, put them on the door, put them in the kitchen, put them everywhere," Schiller said, "... and do you know what happens? They start doing it, too."

-- Be reliable and dependable for the teen. "If you're going to be late, you tell them you're going to be late. I don't care what it takes for you as a parent. ... Call, leave a message on the answering machine," Schiller said. "They come to rely on you, but they'll never let you know."

-- Contact parents of teen peers. "This is going to embarrass your teen to death, (but) do not hesitate to call the other family," Schiller said. "I have found it through the years with my three teens to be one of the most guarded, protective things I've ever done. ... Invariably the other parent says to me, 'I'm glad you called. Thank you for calling.'"

--more--

-- Watch for behaviors that are abnormal even for a teen. According to Schiller, warning signs of a crisis in a teen's life may include constantly aggressive behavior such as bullying; excessive privacy, including not wanting to be with peers; and behavior that is not age-appropriate, such as "a 15-year-old who wants to hang around 11-year-olds."

If these behaviors persist for three to six months -- "not just one or two or three times" -- it's time to consider getting professional help for the teen, Schiller said.

-- Use flannel sheets and serve "mooshy" foods.

"I know you're going, 'Yeah, right, for my teen-ager, flannel bedsheets,'" Schiller said.

"Research states that (for) people who are under severe stress, flannel has a calming, nurturing texture for the life of a teen and a child," she said. "Cold linen sheets remind children as well as teen-agers oftentimes that they're alone."

But she added a caution: "Don't make a big deal with the teens. Just get (the sheets) and put them on the bed."

Schiller's other suggestion also brought smiles to the faces of her listeners: Serve "mooshy," soft foods.

"Incorporate in your (family's) diet mashed potatoes, apple sauce and bananas," she said.

Teens have fun eating such foods, Schiller said. "A teen-ager does not just swallow mashed potatoes. He rolls them around his tongue, shoots them between his teeth or spits them at his sister, but they're very nurturing, very calming and they love those foods," Schiller stated.

Yet there is a more practical, scientific reason the foods help a fretful teen, Schiller noted. "When a teen-ager is under severe stress, all three of those foods contain high levels of potassium. When you're under stress, that's one of the first nutrients that goes out of your body," she said.

Single adult Labor Day getaways, sponsored by the Baptist Sunday School Board's discipleship and family development division, were held at Ridgecrest; Glorieta (N.M.) Conference Center; Branson, Mo.; Destin, Fla.; and San Antonio, Texas. Approximately 6,300 attended the five conferences.

--30--

Conference airs strategies
for coping with difficulties

By Keith Hinson

Baptist Press
9/7/95

RIDGECREST, N.C. (BP)--Single adults should employ a variety of strategies for coping with difficult relationships and problems in today's world, according to three speakers at Ridgecrest (N.C.) Baptist Conference Center, Sept. 1-4, during the Single Adult Labor Day Getaway.

Sandra Anne Shelton, a member of Prestonwood Baptist Church, Dallas, and a corporate speaker in management, leadership and communications, encouraged conferees to learn to deal successfully with difficult people in the workplace. She suggested it's not wise to try to make life hard for difficult co-workers.

"If I keep trying to get you because I don't like your behavior, it just means I decided God made a mistake in making you," Shelton said. She asked conferees to consider that they might also be someone else's difficult person.

Difficult people, Shelton said, "aren't people who have no worth. ... Sometimes they take a job for money. I've seen that twist a thousand lives. I've seen it cause divorces."

Shelton said a key way to avoid becoming a difficult person is to work in a job that uses one's God-given strengths. Likewise, a strategy for dealing with difficult people is to help them work in areas of their own strengths and to affirm the strengths they have, Shelton said.

--more--

"When (a difficult person) gets quiet, they'r not getting out of your hair. You didn't win. They're going to get you later," she said. "Begin to have conversations filled with laughter instead of anger. Figure out where the humor is, ... and I don't mean mocking," she said. "Laughter is healing. Anger is defeating."

Harold Ivan Smith, a speaker and author from Kansas City, Mo., spoke to conferees on "The Art of Evicting Your Fears."

Several times, Smith repeated a sentence he asked the group to remember: "It is good to have available for other things the space that fear takes up in life."

"We live in an age when fear is absolutely epidemic, and what we need is to realize that we are children of the heavenly Father, and he is going to see us through," said Smith, author of "Time for Healing," a book published in the Lay Institute for Equipping series by the Baptist Sunday School Board.

Sometimes single adults and others become preoccupied with their own pasts, Smith suggested, but he said "the only person that's interested in your past is the devil."

Smith asked the group to imagine he would offer someone \$250 to drive him to a nearby restaurant using only the rear-view mirror to navigate, but the windshield would be blocked.

"How come rear-view mirrors are so small and windshields are so wide? Because it's more important where you're going than where you've come from," Smith told the group. "How many single adults ... have switched, and they have a rear-view mirror the size of the windshield, ... and they're trying to peer into the future God's calling (them) to through some tiny little window?"

According to Smith, fear in a person's life can be influenced by the voices they listen to. "If we keep listening to the fear-mongers, this world is in big trouble. There are some single adults who have listened to hate radio more than they've listened to Jesus -- and they've read a certain author's book more than they've read the (Bible)," Smith said.

Some "fear prophets" talk as if "God has resigned, the Holy Spirit has quit and Jesus is just totally incapacitated," Smith said. "But this is my Father's world. The last time I checked, he's still in control -- and nothing's going to happen that God isn't going to see us through."

Carolyn Teague, a member of Northwest Baptist Church, Oklahoma City, suggested to conferees that intimacy is becoming a lost art in America.

"We need to work on friendship. ... We're in trouble culturally with families falling apart," said Teague, director of Inner Change, a ministry based in Little Rock, Ark.

Substitutes for intimacy won't do, Teague said, such as "counterfeit intimacy, which is sexual. ... It's exciting, it's exhilarating, but it's wrong and it's counterfeit, ... and it won't work."

To develop intimate relationships, a Christian should take risks and trust only God, Teague said. "What must you do when people disappoint you? Don't hold a grudge. Don't preoccupy on what they did, because who is that really going to hurt? You. ..."

"We need to refuse to trust other people to come up to our expectations. ... What we need to do is to let God fill up our lives with his care for us. ... Then when some person or some word or some act crushes you, it's not going to get to you like it could if you're not trusting God to meet your needs," Teague said.

In addition to Ridgecrest, Labor Day single adult getaways were held at Glorieta (N.M.) Conference Center; Destin, Fla.; San Antonio, Texas; and Branson, Mo. The conferences were sponsored by the Baptist Sunday School Board's discipleship and family development division.

HOUSE MAIL

(BP)

BAPTIST PRESS
901 Commerce #750
Nashville, TN 37234

F
I
R
S
T

C
L
A
S
S

Southern Baptist Library
and Archives