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Business execs tap faith
to battle 'CEO disease'

By Ken Walker

Baptist Press
10/31/95

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--They battle manmade disasters, grapple with harsh setbacks and struggle to keep a handle on their priorities. Thanks to their faith in Christ, these corporate executives know the blessing of peace in the midst of turmoil.

For Shoney's chief executive officer Stephen Lynn -- hired last May to turn around the struggling chain -- it came from prayer before the \$2.2 billion company was featured in a negative light on national television.

The Nashville, Tenn.,-based company was one of five restaurant operations recently spotlighted on ABC's "Prime Time Live." Lynn termed Shoney's offenses minor compared to other unsanitary conditions cited. Nevertheless, he had to direct a response.

After a pre-program conference with franchisees and managers, he set up a second telephone conference. In addition to the CEO, participants included the company's chief financial officer, the chairman of its public relations firm and several franchisees.

All are Christians; they prayed that God would give them a spirit of gratitude despite the difficulty. Lynn began by recalling Scriptures the Lord had brought to his mind that morning about thankfulness.

"Paul wrote about being thankful even in the midst of heartbreak and persecution," said Lynn. "Paul said one of the things we need to do is be absolutely thankful and that's not easy to do when you're being abused."

Likewise for Rachele "Ray" Hood-Phillips. She remembered how stunned she was after a company-wide uproar at her former employer's office a few years ago.

Atheists and agnostics objected to advance notices about a National Day of Prayer observance. Unbowed, Hood-Phillips turned to electronic mail and word-of-mouth to publicize the meeting, which featured a talk by a member of the Miami Dolphins.

Now the president of her own company, she remains outspoken about her beliefs, said the member of First Baptist Church of Greer in suburban Greenville, S.C.

That included objecting last spring to a proposed training curriculum she worked on for a government agency; it described homosexuality as a "natural" condition.

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"It's a choice," declared Hood-Phillips, president of Inclusive Business Strategies, a diversity consulting firm. "I was born an African American woman but people have a choice whether or not they are a homosexual. Most companies in diversity training are pushing the agenda that there's nothing you can do about it. But I had that removed from the curriculum."

Though such stances sometimes attract vehement opposition, she has no problem with telling someone when their beliefs or actions don't line up with the Word of God. Nor does she fret over the possibility of business situations conflicting with her biblical beliefs.

"When I was first born again and new in the Lord, it was a real struggle," said Hood-Phillips. "But I don't know the last time I looked over my shoulder. When the Lord says walk, I can walk."

Four years ago, Pete Erben found himself the unwilling center of attention when a suicidal gunman killed or wounded 45 people at Luby's Cafeteria in Killeen, Tex.

The member of Trinity Baptist Church in San Antonio spearheaded the company's response, which included a \$100,000 donation to a victims' assistance fund.

Though the CEO of the Luby's chain earned public praise for that compassionate response, his faith proved equally important when his wife of 37 years, Judith Ann, died in 1993.

"It's been two years ago and it's still tough," said Erben, struggling to maintain his composure. "It helps to remember Judith's love for the Lord, and mine. The only thing you've got to help you survive is faith."

For the cafeteria chain owner, that also means the way he handles his private grief should show in the way he conducts daily business.

"I hope my conduct is my greatest witness in regard to how I treat people and do things. I've got an all-encompassing philosophy and that's that love is the foundation of Christianity and my testimony. If you apply its principles, you come closer to fulfilling Christ's mandate more than with any other guideline."

Though eight years have passed, Greg Horton vividly remembers how the Lord helped him withstand the shock of the "Black Monday" stock market crash.

Horton, one of the founders of Ryan's and Quincy's restaurants, was on a mission trip in a small South Korean town when he heard the news. Back in Seoul a few days later, a group of Americans were in the hotel lobby bemoaning their losses of between \$5,000 and \$50,000.

"I told them I didn't know what they were groaning about," said the deacon at Temple Baptist Church, Simpsonville, S.C. "The best I could figure, I had lost between \$3.5 million and \$4 million. They couldn't understand why I wasn't ready to go out and shoot myself."

"I told them the only thing I could think of was the Lord was trying to get my attention, to make me aware of where things stood. Like it says in the Bible, things can come and go quickly. He showed me how fast he can wipe it out if he wants to."

But Christianity is valuable for more than just coping with problems. It helps business leaders keep their priorities straight and place love of God and family ahead of money and prestige.

Horton, who now operates his own business, said he and his wife have always expressed their availability to employees to discuss spiritual matters.

"A lot, when they know that, will call you if they have a problem," he said. "A good percentage of people are seeking something but they don't know what they're seeking."

A consultant for Flagstar, the parent company or franchise owner of several major restaurant chains, Hood-Phillips faced an interesting dilemma recently.

Basketball star A.C. Green had purchased Flagstar's interest in Denny's restaurants in Portland, Ore. She was expected to be on hand for the press conference announcing the transaction. However, her teen-age daughter also had a problem at school. Hood-Phillips chose family first and backed out of the press conference.

"The biggest challenge is to find a correct balance," she said. "I see work as a ministry, but trying to balance ministry and family is a tough thing for me."

At Shoney's, Lynn knows how the lure of ego gratification can knock him off balance. Most people in his position battle "CEO disease," he said. He defines that as the temptation to believe flattering press clippings and people telling him what they think he wants to hear.

"Truth becomes a very precious commodity. Generally, you come up with a new idea and everyone says it's a great idea whether they believe it or not. The ways you can get entrapped in the non-Christian world is by all its trappings."

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Faith prepared Shoney's CEO
for job loss, dad's suicide

By Ken Walker

Baptist Press
10/31/95

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--In Matthew 28:19, Jesus told his followers to go into the world and make disciples, which to Stephen Lynn means the corporate marketplace. The new chief executive officer of Shoney's knows God has placed him in an arena not open to many church members.

Not only is the church not reaching successful, affluent business and professional persons, Lynn doesn't believe that was part of God's design. Instead, he sees the role belonging to believers like him who function in the daily corporate world.

"These people have to be reached by people they relate to," said Lynn, 48, an evangelical Presbyterian. "No disrespect intended, but I don't think Holy-Ghost, Christian-jargon, Bible-toting folks are going to reach them. They have to be reached where they're hurting. Most of the world doesn't realize they are.

"Most of my time is spent around non-Christians and I think that's the ministry God wants me to be involved in. Which means I have to be really disciplined about getting spiritually nourished and not getting caught up in the trappings of success and the world."

At one time, that was all that attracted the Georgia native to business. Though he achieved his goal of becoming president of a company by age 29, he didn't find the peace and joy he expected.

The following year, when his wife asked him what mattered most in life, he listed three things: power, recognition and money. Her disappointed reaction let him know he had twisted out of whack the priorities expressed in their wedding vows, he said.

That set him on a year-long search for meaning in life, ending with his acceptance of Christ as Savior. It prepared him for a pair of unexpected shocks that soon followed: getting fired and his father's suicide.

When the latter occurred, one of the men who helped lead him to salvation shared how Romans 8:28 -- "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose" (NIV) -- could minister to him. Lynn meditated on the Scripture. It didn't make him feel any better but he grasped its deeper significance.

"God is saying that anything that's happening to me that's hurtful is going to be less hurtful," said the CEO. "But he's going to use that to mold me into who he wants me to be and to bless me. What it told me was that regardless of what I was going through, there was an end to the pain. There was hope and a light at the end of the tunnel."

That story is part of many speeches he makes at various business organizations and clubs and on college campuses. He includes stories about the Sonic Corp., whose sagging sales he helped turn around, and Shoney's, which he joined last May.

But he uses his path in business to describe how he came to trust in Jesus.

Though he tries to do it in a "non-offensive, non-preachy" manner, Lynn said such encounters are draining spiritually. To maintain a focus on the Lord, he has a daily morning quiet time and participates in an accountability group.

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It is easy to get wrapped up in the day-to-day crises that confront any company in a corporate turnaround, Lynn added. For example, Shoney's quarterly earnings in September dropped 37 percent over the previous year. The CEO said it will take 12 to 18 months to see significant changes.

Yet God is showing him how to approach the challenge. Lynn said his morning prayer time helped him design a four-point plan:

- 1) To have peace about his identity and purpose.
- 2) Be patient that the Lord will accomplish his work in due time.
- 3) Remain humble, recognizing that only God can elevate people to positions of power and influence. "So why do I have any reason to be uppity?"
- 4) Show unconditional love for all people.

"What I'm finding is if I prayerfully think of those things as I go into a meeting with a franchisee who has sued me and is angry with me ... it affects the air of the meeting. It helps me stay focused and affects how that process goes."

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Key church growth components
underscored in seminary study

By Pat Cole

Baptist Press
10/31/95

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--A study of growing Southern Baptist churches has affirmed the evangelistic effectiveness of biblical preaching, intentional prayer ministries and outreach-oriented Sunday schools.

These factors were consistently cited as important in most evangelistic churches of all sizes, said church growth author and professor Thom S. Rainer. The study was conducted by Southern Baptist Theological Seminary's Billy Graham School of Missions, Evangelism and Church Growth, which Rainer serves as dean.

"God is using a variety of methodologies that are as numerous as the churches themselves," Rainer said. "God is using a variety of methods to draw people to himself." Preaching, prayer and Sunday school nevertheless formed the "big three evangelistic methodologies," he said.

The results of the study were unveiled during a Oct. 24-26 church growth conference in Louisville, Ky., hosted by the Graham school. The study was based on the responses of 576 Southern Baptist churches from around the country.

All churches surveyed had baptized at least 26 people last year and had recorded at least one baptism for every 20 members. A survey instrument was mailed to each of the 1,400 Southern Baptist churches which met both criteria. The return of 576 useable survey forms was well above the average response rate for a study of this nature, Rainer said.

In their responses, 90 percent of church leaders indicated preaching is an important evangelistic methodology.

"The pulpit is powerful," Rainer said. "In our infatuation with church growth methodologies over the past three decades, the role of preaching for evangelistic growth has been sorely ignored."

More than 60 percent of the respondents cited prayer as a major component of their church's evangelistic ministry. "Though one must be careful about explaining the work of a sovereign God, we can see one clearly discernible pattern in many of these newly awakened churches," Rainer said. That pattern, he explained, is that a new emphasis on prayer touched the church "prior to the visible manifestations of God's Spirit" revealed through "repentance, brokenness and people coming to Christ."

Among program-based evangelistic methods, Sunday school is clearly the most successful among growing Southern Baptist churches, Rainer said. More than 60 percent of church leaders said Sunday school is a key part of their outreach. Rainer said respondents expressed amusement at the prediction by some that the Sunday school would decline or die.

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"When we asked them why such predictions were being made, they had a unified response," Rainer said. "The problem with non-evangelistic Sunday schools is not the program itself, but the failure to utilize the program as an intentional evangelistic tool."

In addition to preaching, prayer and Sunday school, Rainer noted several other methods frequently mentioned by leaders of evangelistic Southern Baptist churches, including:

-- Relationship evangelism. More than half of the church leaders cited the importance of relationship evangelism in their congregations. These are evangelistic efforts stemming from friendships developed in the work places, schools and neighborhoods.

-- Traditional outreach. About 50 percent of the churches have weekly visitation programs. "Cold-call visitation is not dead," Rainer said.

-- Youth evangelism. Almost half of the churches emphasized youth evangelism in addition to youth ministry.

-- Music ministry. Nearly 50 percent of the church leaders reported music ministry played a significant part in outreach efforts. Yet no single style of music predominated. About 40 percent of church leaders identified their worship services as "traditional," 30 percent as "contemporary" and 30 percent as "blended."

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Jim Henry notes personal list
of church growth principles

By Rob Plummer

Baptist Press
10/31/95

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--"The church is to be a church on the grow because it's a biblical principle," Jim Henry told a church growth conference at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Henry, president of the Southern Baptist Convention president and pastor of First Baptist Church, Orlando, Fla., enumerated 30 principles of church growth he has observed in his 35-year pastoral ministry.

Among them:

- "You have to be willing to change."
- "Expect criticism."
- "It's going to take hard work."
- "Be flexible."
- "While you're growing, don't lose your family."
- "Failure isn't fatal."
- "Having a crowd doesn't mean you have a church."
- "The Bible must be the basis for your growth plans."
- "Pray and fast at strategic times."

Henry was a featured speaker for the "Church Growth: Myths and Realities" conference Oct. 24-26, hosted by the Louisville, Ky., seminary's Billy Graham School of Missions, Evangelism and Church Growth.

Along with the various strategies for church growth, Henry emphasized church leaders must pay close attention to their devotional life.

"Your relationship with Jesus is the most important thing you'll experience in your ministry," he said. "Let that be your goal -- that Christ's character is formed in you."

Henry shared a conversation he had with the famous Baptist pastor R.G. Lee: "He told me, 'Stay on your knees, in the Book and close to your people.'"

During an evening session of the conference, Henry spoke enthusiastically to a crowd of 190 Southern Baptist pastors and lay leaders from 42 different states.

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Citing statistics that demonstrate church planting activity in western states, an increase in overseas baptisms, unprecedented missionary appointments and missions giving "beyond anything we've ever had," Henry said, "There's a sense everywhere I go that God is moving in a fresh way in Southern Baptist life."

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Plummer is a newswriter at Southern Seminary.

**Wheelchair-bound vet leads
mission to nix barriers**

By Dave Parker

Baptist Press
10/31/95

GROVE, Okla. (BP)--When Dan Dareing led Elk River Baptist Mission into its first building program, he decided he wanted the church to be completely barrier free.

So, he worked with architects and contractors to come up with a church that can be accessed by people no matter what kind of disability they may have.

The mission, five miles northeast of Grove, Okla., has a smooth asphalt parking lot that connects with wide sidewalks. There are no lips on the door sills, and every door is wide enough to accommodate wheelchairs and walkers.

Water fountains are accessible, as are rest rooms, and even the pulpit has a ramp leading up to it.

Any new construction is required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) to provide access to disabled people, but Dareing said that was not the prime motivator at Elk River.

"I am an advocate to tearing down barriers," he explained. "We need to make our churches accessible to people who want to come, but can't."

Many times he has heard church members complain about spending money for accessibility because "we don't have any disabled members."

"Maybe you don't have any disabled members because they can't make it into your building," he said.

Dareing should know. After all, he himself has been in a wheelchair 17 years. A Vietnam War veteran, Dareing, 46, was shot in the leg, causing him to walk with a limp. Then, he developed a viral disease in his spine that left him wheelchair-bound.

"At first when I got in the wheelchair I was real self-conscious," he said. "I was kind of withdrawn from society. I was ready to check it all in. But I grew out of that and learned to drive.

"I got discouraged in the ministry because I couldn't go into people's houses, so I put a megaphone in the front of my van." He pulls up to a member's home and calls to them from his van.

He has preached graveside funerals in muddy cemeteries where he had to be carried to the grave. He has preached revivals and has done supply and interim work for years. Very few of the churches he preached in were even remotely accessible.

"This mission has been a real reward to me," he said. "I am kind of seeing the fruits of my ministry."

Some people have a hard time dealing with the preacher being in a wheelchair, but Dareing said that doesn't matter. "I blow past all of that," he said. "I don't even waste time with other people's hangups. Once they get to know me, they like me. I got over the crying stage a long time ago.

"I have preached more than 70 revival meetings. I've got a little pulpit I made. I call it a stump. I just pull up and preach away."

The biggest challenge, he said, is children, who always seem to be afraid of wheelchairs. Dareing said he will talk to them and shake their hands.

"A while back one little boy said, 'Look, 'mama, he escaped from the hospital,'" Dareing recalled, laughing.

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The mission's first building was dedicated Aug. 27. Future plans call for adding a larger sanctuary on the south end of the education wing. And whatever the church builds, it will be accessible.

"We should be in the business of reaching people, not turning them away," Dareing said.

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For information on making your church accessible, write the National Council on Disabilities, 1331 F Street NW Suite 1050, Washington, DC 20004-1107, or send a fax to the NCD at (202) 272-2022.

Handicapped volunteer:

'I know prayer handles it'

By Sarah Zimmerman

Baptist Press

10/31/95

MINERAL WELLS, Texas (BP)--Prayer warms Loraine Finney's attitude, even in the frozen food section.

Finney's favorite T-shirt has a drawing of Jesus' nail-scarred hand, and her favorite hat reads, "I am so blessed." When Finney wore those to the grocery store, they caught the attention of another woman who shared her problems with Finney.

"We had prayer right in front of the orange juice," Finney said. "The lady needed prayer and I pray wherever."

Finney has used an electric wheelchair since 1990 due to a litany of medical problems, ranging from polio and spinal meningitis as a child to strokes and multiple sclerosis as an adult.

"I'm 51, but I wasn't supposed to see age 5," Finney says. "Doctors said if I lived I'd be a vegetable and I'd never walk or talk. I haven't figured out what kind of vegetable I am, but I must be a pretty sturdy one."

Most of her life Finney lived with her parents, but her father died in 1992 and her mother died in 1993. "I've been trying to manage ever since. Some days are hard, but I know prayer handles it."

Finney is a member of Immanuel Baptist Church, Mineral Wells, Texas. When it's not dark or too hot, Finney takes her wheelchair the 10 blocks from her home to church. For most church services, members pick her up in a van equipped for wheelchairs then go to a nursing home to pick up more members for church services.

Finney sings in the church choir, although she has to sit next to the organ because she cannot get to the choir loft. "I don't complain because I have to sit in a power wheelchair. I praise the Lord that I have a power wheelchair. I have to sit in a wheelchair to sing, but he's given me the voice. I have to sing."

Before Finney was confined to a wheelchair, she served as a Mission Service Corps volunteer in an apartment ministry. Now that her mobility is limited, her main ministry is calling homebound people.

"I check on people and pray for them. One lady and I sing for a while (on the phone) as well as having prayer."

The people she calls want to talk about their health or how to handle their frustrations. If someone needs special attention, Finney calls other church members to do the legwork to take care of the need. Finney says she identifies with the people she calls because "it takes someone who is handicapped to know what another is going through."

That doesn't mean Finney hosts a pity party for people she calls. "I'm not thrilled to death to have all these (medical problems), but what you can't do anything about, why cry over it? What you can't do anything about, accept. If you can do something about it, do it."

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BP photo (vertical) mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Atlanta bureau of Baptist Press.

Upstate New York's challenges
recounted by missions director By Victor Lee

WAKE FOREST, N.C. (BP)--When Jim Goforth moved from a pastorate in east Texas to an associational position in upstate New York, he learned the difference in the influence the Southern Baptist Convention had in each place.

"The last church I pastored in east Texas, from the minute I was named pastor, there was immediate respect because of the position I held in the largest Baptist church in town," said Goforth, director of Missions in the Adirondack Baptist Association for the past four years.

"When I moved to New York, I realized it wouldn't have mattered how big my church was, I would have to earn that right to be heard."

Goforth was on Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary's Wake Forest, N.C., campus Oct. 25 to speak with students who believe they are called to pioneer missions in upstate New York. It is a beautiful -- but tough -- area, a mountainous year-round resort region with long, hard winters and people unaccustomed to evangelism in general and Southern Baptist life in particular, he said.

In the Adirondack association's four counties are 285,000 residents but just 16 Southern Baptist churches -- approximately a 1 to 17,000 church-to-resident ratio. For comparison, the ratio in Georgia -- a mainstream Baptist state -- according to 1994 statistics was 1 to 2,028.

"There are not a lot of strong evangelical churches there," Goforth said, explaining there are 70 to 100 communities of 2,000 to 3,000 people each with virtually no evangelical witness of any kind.

Ministering in such an area requires patience, determination and a unquestionable call from God, Goforth said.

"Most of the churches will never have the size and prestige that I'm afraid too many (pastors) are looking for," he said. "Too many are looking for a secure place rather than to be in a place God has called them."

Two pastors from central North Carolina have recently answered God's call to upstate New York, Goforth noted. Randy Niswonger, a May 1995 graduate from Southeastern, is serving at Lawrenceville Baptist Church and Wayne McNeill of Bunn, N.C., is pastor of First Christian Church, Brushton.

Goforth hopes the influence of these men, and the partnership New York has had with North Carolina the past five years, will encourage more pastors to pray about serving in upstate New York.

"They would need to understand that most of the people don't have a traditional church background," Goforth said. "They need to be willing to just meet the people where they are, to understand them and not to try to carry a traditional SBC program into a church and say, 'This is what we're going to do, period.'

"Just be open to whatever the Lord's doing. You do that by being able to relate to people, by accepting them where they are, by becoming part of the community yourself."

To serve in a pioneer mission area, one must do so with the attitude that it will become home, Goforth continued.

"Once when I went back to Texas for Christmas," Goforth said, "one of the people in my association said, 'So, you're going home for Christmas.' I said, 'No, home is here. I'm going to Texas to visit my family.'

"It takes a while to gain their trust."

If the time isn't invested, the results can be disastrous, Goforth warned.

"Frankly, short-term ministries have often done more harm than good," he said.

He tells the story of one church which has had six pastors in the past 13 years.

"One of the ladies in the church asked me, 'What's wrong with us that nobody wants to stay with us?'" Goforth said. "When that happens, people are afraid to trust. The people feel like they've been deserted.

"After four years, I still have people ask me, 'How long are you going to stay?'"

There are many needs besides church ministry in upstate New York, Goforth said, noting there are 10 correctional facilities, eight colleges and universities and two Mohawk Indian reservations. There is minimal ministry activity at each place, he said.

"The Lake Placid (Baptist) Association is in our area, so we're working at getting ministry established to the athletes that come in from all over the world," Goforth said, referring to the training center on the site of the 1980 Winter Olympics.

Goforth isn't trying to sell pastors on upstate New York -- he's just trying to get them to ask the question, "Am I called there?"

"I've got to believe -- and this is true in the Foreign Mission Board and Home Missions Board -- that God is calling more people than are responding," he said.

"The ones that come and stick it out are the ones that know God has placed a real missions call on their lives. And if they'll come and love their people and proclaim the Word, they can have a powerful ministry."

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Lee is a writer for Southeastern Seminary.

Today's culture awaits witness
from believers, Hawkins says

By Dena Dyer

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10/31/95

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--Modern-day believers are called to minister in an "ecotonic" world, said O.S. Hawkins, pastor of First Baptist Church, Dallas, at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary Oct. 26.

Hawkins was referring to an ecotone, a place where two ecosystems come together.

"It is a place of tremendous possibility, or a place that has the potential for all sorts of problems," Hawkins said in a chapel address at the Fort Worth, Texas, seminary. "Just like an ecotone, the modern and post-modern worlds are coming together. This is an exciting time for churches who dare to translate the gospel in a relevant way to the post-modern world."

Why do so many people not know Christ? "This generation has not left the church; the church has left them," Hawkins said. "We have not made him known to them."

Churches today are scrambling to reach people who are gone from the church, so they often do one of four things, Hawkins said.

Some churches compromise the message to make it more palatable, he explained. "The cross is still a stumbling block, so some churches just remove it."

Other churches condemn the lost, Hawkins said, and some even condone such immoral fiber in our culture as "alternative lifestyles."

But he noted some churches are confronting unbelievers with the message of the gospel in love and compassion.

Hawkins also said Christians must penetrate culture as the apostle Paul did. "He was just one man, but with the help of a few friends and through the power of God, he impacted the world."

The current generation known as "Generation X" is looking for five basic things, Hawkins said: "They are searching for meaningful relationships, immediate gratification, something for nothing, guilt-free living and prosperity."

Yet noting Ephesians 1:7, Hawkins emphasized Christians have the answers to all their needs in the person of Jesus Christ.

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"In him we have redemption -- that's a meaningful personal relationship," he said. "We hav n't translated to the world that Christianity is not a religion but a relationship."

He noted salvation is something immediate. "Our redemption is happening in the present time, not just in the future. But we haven't made that clear to those who are searching."

Generation X wants something for nothing, Hawkins stressed, and salvation is a free gift that already has been purchased for them.

"We must preach the blood of Christ," Hawkins said. "I'm not redeemed by Christ's example or by his preaching -- I'm redeemed by his blood."

Hawkins concluded, "What Generation X -- the generation we are called to reach -- is longing for is not something but someone, and his sweet name is Jesus Christ."

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(BP) photos available on SBCNet and from Southwestern's office of public relations.

T.W. Hunt tells story behind
'The Mind of Christ' study

By Debbie Moore

Baptist Press
10/31/95

NEW ORLEANS (BP)--Like Moses, T.W. Hunt once said, "But I'm not a good public speaker!" That was a few hundred conferences ago.

Hunt was a professor who truly enjoyed being a professor, he told students at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary during a recent chapel service. He was on campus Oct. 23-27 to present his "The Mind of Christ" study during a Chautauqua conference for senior adults, sponsored by the Baptist Sunday School Board.

"It was very surprising to me," Hunt said, since he wasn't "some flashy, high-pressure speaker," that God might want him to publicly present his study on spiritual truths found in Philipians 2:5-11.

It all begin with a prayer Hunt had asked several years before: "Lord, can a finite man have the mind of Christ?"

From that prayer came a Bible study that has benefited the entire Southern Baptist Convention as thousands of laypersons and ministers have gone through the course, studied the book or seen the video titled "The Mind of Christ."

Through the years, as he had searched the Scriptures and "as I had prayed and thought, I found God was changing the structure of my thought life," he said. After mentioning these developments to a friend, he was asked to share some of his Bible study, scriptural truths and insights at the friend's church. But after giving in to one request to make a presentation, Hunt started receiving many requests.

"It was all very surprising to me since I am a teacher, not a preacher," Hunt said, "but God wants to do things exceedingly, abundantly above all that we ask or think."

Take the initial production of Hunt's study guide, for instance, which was, in short, a miracle.

"We had \$37," said Hunt, who originally endeavored to self-publish his materials. However, the total printing cost would be \$1,000.

"I know God can do this," he told the printer as he handed over his manuscript and told him to go with it.

A few days later, the treasurer of Hunt's church called saying a man had just phoned him and said not only that he had a received an unexpected dividend, but that God had told him "T.W. Hunt is supposed to get the money." Hunt drove to the church thankful to be receiving some help toward the printing cost, but when he opened envelope and found a check for \$1,000 he knew he had heard God correctly when he believed God had told him to proceed with the printing of the study notes.

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"Well, then I just couldn't wait to get the bill!" Hunt said. However, a few days later when the mail arrived at his home, he discovered the bill that was supposed to be for \$1,000 ended up being for \$1,097, "and we had already spent the \$37!" he said.

Trying not to lose faith, Hunt went back to opening his mail. A few envelopes later, he found a note from a man who said he had been praying for Hunt. The man went on to write that he felt T.W. Hunt had a need and that he was the man God wanted to meet that need.

Attached Hunt found a check for \$100.

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Christian Country Music Awards
to be telecast on FamilyNet

By C.C. Risenhoover

Baptist Press
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FORT WORTH, Texas--The annual Christian Country Music Awards will be telecast live Nov. 2 from 8-10 p.m. Central Standard Time on FamilyNet, the broadcast television service of the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission that reaches into more than 33 million households nationwide.

The RTVC also will bring the live two-hour program to the Faith and Values Channel (F&V), which carries ACTS programming. ACTS, the RTVC's cable television service, reaches into almost 24 million homes.

Co-hosts Marty Raybon, Paul Overstreet and Susie Luchsinger will perform on the program originating from "Trinity City" in Hendersonville, Tenn. Other featured entertainers include Eddie Rabbit, Jeff and Sheri Easter, MidSouth, Seneca, Bruce Haynes and Ken Holloway.

"Billboard" magazine is covering the event. Recorded interviews and highlights will later be shown on The Nashville Network (TNN).

"We're pleased to be able to bring the third annual Christian Country Music Awards to our viewers," said Deborah Key, RTVC vice president of network operations. "Because of the tremendous popularity of Christian country music, we anticipate a large audience for this outstanding program."

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