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November 17, 1994

Arkansas Baptist State Convention

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ARKANSAS BAPTIST

Volume 93, Number 23

November 17, 1994



1994 Arkansas Baptist State Convention

**Reach
People**



1 9 9 5
Building God's Family

A total of 1,081 registered messengers attended the 1994 Arkansas Baptist State Convention, held Nov. 1-2 at Immanuel Church in Little Rock. The theme for the meeting was "Reach People," which also will be the state convention's 1995 ministry emphasis.

Planning committee unveils five-year state ministry plan

"Arkansas Awakening," a five-year ministry focus for Arkansas Baptists through the year 2000, features "God-sized goals," according to Jimmie Sheffield, state convention associate executive director.

The long-range goals, approved by messengers as part of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention Executive Board recommendations, emphasize that the purpose of the Executive Board programs "is to encourage and assist churches and associations accomplish their biblical mission."

The goals were developed by a "Directions 2000" long-range planning committee established during last year's annual meeting.

Noting that the committee's report was completed "after many hours of agonizing and working," Sheffield added, "As you examine those goals, keep in mind a definition of goals: A desired result you wish to accomplish during a certain period of time. We sought earnestly to write God-sized goals."

An eight-page report described "Arkansas Awakening" as a five-year emphasis with annual themes focusing on: Live the Word (1996), Strengthen the Family (1987), Build the Church (1988), Touch the Community (1999) and Reach the World (2000).

The report included 14 specific areas of concern including worship, leadership training, social and ethical issues, family issues, cultural and racial issues, evangelism, conflict and unity issues, strategy planning, ministry, missions, discipleship, church starts, spiritual awakening and financial stewardship.

According to the report, the goals will involve assisting congregations and associations throughout the state in each of the 14 targeted areas.

Introducing a multimedia presentation interpreting the five-year emphasis, Sheffield explained, "Arkansas Awakening is more than a set of goals. It is our vision for 1996-2000. We want you to sense and to feel that vision."

The multimedia presentation included a video as well as personal testimonies and dramatic skits which highlighted each of the emphases.

'Symbol of the future'

"Directions 2000" committee member David Uth, pastor of Immanuel Church in El Dorado, told participants that "the year 2000 is a symbol of the future."

"In our world we are seeing unprecedented change and advancement," he said. "Just as great as the opportunities and the excitement of a new millennium is the need for these years."

"I hope and pray you have caught a vision for what they mean for Arkansas Baptists," he commented.

"Will we awaken to the opportunity for these years?" Uth asked. "It could be a time of unprecedented growth to reach people to do the impossible. God will be in the 21st century. Will Arkansas Baptists be awake, will we be with Him?"

"This is a defining moment in the life of the church," Uth added. "In biblical times, the disciples, when Jesus needed them to watch and pray, what were they doing? They were found asleep. Will we be awake and watching?"

Cover Story



'Reach People'

Arkansas Baptists gathered Nov. 1-2 at Immanuel Church in Little Rock for the 141st session of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention. This issue of the *Arkansas Baptist Newsmagazine* is dedicated to comprehensive coverage of the 1994 annual meeting.

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ARKANSAS BAPTIST

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Messengers adopt \$16.6 million CP goal

By Trennis Henderson

Editor, Arkansas Baptist

Arkansas Baptist messengers voted Nov. 1 to adopt a 1995 Cooperative Program budget of \$16.6 million, including a slight percentage increase for Southern Baptist Convention causes. The budget goal is a 4 percent increase over the 1994 CP goal of \$15.96 million and a 9 percent increase over 1993 CP receipts of approximately \$15.2 million.

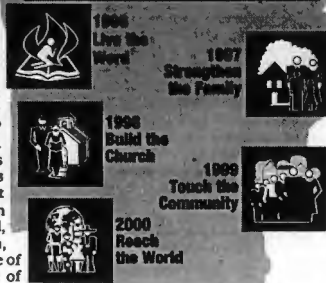
The 1995 budget proposal includes 58.23 percent for total state programs and 41.77 percent for Southern Baptist Convention causes. State convention Executive Board president Rich Kincl, pastor of Central Church in Magnolia, said the national CP allocation increase of 0.02 percent reflects the percentage of growth in CP gifts from local churches.

Although the percentage increase to national causes is small, executive director Don Moore told board members the increase comes at a time when many other state conventions are reducing their national CP percentages.

The 58.23 percent of the budget remaining in the state includes 29.98 percent for Executive Board programs, 14.47 percent for Ouachita Baptist University, 4.36 percent for Williams Baptist College, 2.68 percent for Children's Homes and Family Ministries, 2.27 percent for church annuity dues, 1.57 percent for the Arkansas Baptist Foundation, 1.34 percent for the *Arkansas Baptist Newsmagazine*, 0.78 percent for the ministerial scholarship fund and 0.78 percent for convention expenses.

Other Executive Board recommendations approved by messengers included long-range plans proposed by the convention's "Directions 2000" committee, goals and projects for the state convention's 1995 "Reach People" emphasis and a

Arkansas Awakening



change in structure from a World Hunger Committee to a World Hunger Work Group.

The "Directions 2000" report highlights 14 goals in such areas as worship, leadership training, social and ethical issues, family issues, cultural and racial issues, evangelism, mission support, discipleship and stewardship. The five-year theme is "Arkansas Awakening," with annual themes focusing on Live the Word, Strengthen the Family, Build the Church, Touch the Community and Reach the World.

In addition to the long-range goals, messengers affirmed the goals and projects for the state convention's 1995 "Reach People" emphasis, the final focus of the five-year "Building God's Family" theme.

Priority projects for the coming year highlight "Here's Hope," the convention-wide simultaneous revival emphasis for 1995. Specific projects will focus on Here's Hope revivals in Iowa and Europe where Arkansas Baptists currently have missions

partnerships as well as a Here's Hope college emphasis, media campaign and church-starting effort.

Sunday School priority projects will include Great Commission Break-through assisting churches in Sunday School growth, ABSC-sponsored associational Sunday School conventions training up to 5,000 workers and an effort to start 200 new Sunday School teaching units on "Great Start Sunday," Oct. 1, 1995.

Other priorities for 1995 include church revival assistance for baptismless and smaller membership churches, Christian club training for students and pastors and Discipleship Training growth and enrichment.

Messengers also approved a request that the World Hunger Committee, a standing committee of the state convention, be changed to a World Hunger Work Group. The change will allow all of the state convention programs that relate to hunger issues to be involved along with pastors and laypeople in the state who have an ongoing concern for world hunger.

In addition to proposals presented for action by messengers, the Executive Board held two meetings in conjunction with the annual meeting. Action during those two meetings included the election of Marion Reynolds as an associate in the Arkansas Baptist State Convention missions department and electing Darrel Ray as full-time Baptist Student Union director for Westark Community College in Fort Smith (see related article on page 19).

Executive Board members also elected new officers for the coming year. Jere Mitchell, pastor of First Church, Fayetteville, was elected president and Randy Maxwell, pastor of South Highland Church in Little Rock, was elected vice president. Both men were elected by acclamation.

Chapman thanks Arkansas Baptists for CP support

Morris Chapman, president of the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee, voiced personal appreciation to Arkansas Baptists for their ongoing support of the Cooperative Program.

"I want to thank you for the part you're doing in Arkansas," said Chapman, who presented the Southern Baptist Convention report during the Arkansas Baptist Convention State Convention annual meeting. "I want to thank you for your faithfulness in giving through the Cooperative Program."

Chapman told messengers and guests that Southern Baptist CP gifts reached an all-time high of \$142.8 million during the past year. He announced a few days later through Baptist Press, however, that the \$142.8 million included both national CP gifts received from state conventions and "Cooperative-SBC Causes" gifts; a new designation for national gifts received directly from churches or individuals.

Chapman issued the clarification through Baptist Press following an Associated Baptist Press article which reported that more

than \$1.4 million of the \$6.3 million CP increase for 1993-94 included restricted funds from state Baptist conventions and funds sent directly from churches and individuals to the SBC. Prior to this year, such funds were reported as designated gifts rather than Cooperative Program funds.

During his report, Chapman noted that Cooperative Program support "has helped glue us together as Southern Baptists....It has kept our minds on being sacrificial." He said ongoing CP support demonstrates that "Southern Baptists in the pew and our pastors in the pulpit have a desire to fulfill the Great Commission and to reach people around the world for Christ."

Emphasizing that "our primary responsibility is to have Southern Baptists catch a new vision for reaching the world for Christ in the 21st century," Chapman added, "The Cooperative Program is a vehicle and a wonderful vehicle but the Cooperative Program is not the vision....It is simply the channel for us to give faithfully to try to reach our world for Jesus Christ."

Messengers re-elect Rogers as president

Arkansas Baptist State Convention president Ronnie Rogers, pastor of Lakeside Church in Hot Springs, was re-elected by acclamation Nov. 2 to a second one-year term as president.

Rogers was nominated by Kerry Powell, pastor of First Church, McGehee, who described Rogers as a committed Christian, a compassionate communicator, a considerate companion and a confidential counselor.

Messengers also re-elected Jim McDaniel, pastor of First Church, Brinkley, as first vice president. McDaniel, who was nominated by Stephen Davis, pastor of First Church, Russellville, was elected by a vote of 364-249 over Bruce Tippitt, pastor of Flanna Hills Church in Fort Smith. Tippitt was nominated by Greg Kirksey, pastor of First Church, Benton.

David Uth, pastor of Immanuel Church, El Dorado, was elected second vice president by a vote of 317-226 over David McLemore, pastor of Second Church, Russellville. Uth was nominated by Larry Page, executive director of the Arkansas Christian Civic Foundation, and McLemore was nominated by Jimmie Wallace, pastor of Lonoke Church.

Among the convention officers, Rogers is a graduate of Criswell College and Henderson State University. He is a trustee of Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary where he was recently elected to the presidential search committee and



Current Arkansas Baptist State Convention officers are (left to right) second vice president David Uth of El Dorado, first vice president Jim McDaniel of Brinkley and president Ronnie Rogers of Hot Springs.

also is a member of Criswell College's board of overseers.

McDaniel, who has been pastor of Brinkley First Church for 23 years, is a graduate of Ouachita Baptist University and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. He is a former president of the ABCS Executive Board as well as a trustee of the SBC Education Commission.

Uth is a graduate of Ouachita Baptist University and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. He is an OBU trustee, second vice president of the state CCF and a former president of Arkansas' Southwestern Seminary alumni chapter.

Rogers said his first year as state convention president provided him "a great, great privilege to meet a lot of God's people known as Arkansas Baptists." He said the experience "offered a wonderful opportunity to better understand Arkansas

Baptists and the SBC....For me, it has been a stretching experience."

Looking toward the future, Rogers affirmed the need to pursue spiritual awakening. Noting that he has "gained a greater appreciation, coupled with a sense of urgency about what the possibility is," he added, "I want to emphasize the absolute urgency of spiritual awakening. This is more than a program....If God doesn't do something and we don't avail ourselves of His presence, I think the decline is going to increase precipitously.

"My goal as president is to try to live a godly life and try to balance my responsibilities and be faithful to God," Rogers said. "I want to focus in on pastors and churches being what God wants us to be and to realize our culture is going counter to that....We need to speak the truth in compassion and love."

Messengers handle diverse business items

Dedicating the 1994 Arkansas Baptist State Convention Annual and expanding the Arkansas Baptist News magazine board of directors were among items of miscellaneous business approved by messengers to the 1994 ABCS annual meeting. Messengers also rejected a motion to instruct the program committees of the state convention and the Arkansas Baptist Pastors' Conference "to seek and secure on their programs only Southern Baptists."

Dillard Miller, director of missions for Ouachita Association, recommended that the 1994 Arkansas Baptist State Convention Annual be dedicated to the memory of Shirley Moore and Glendon and Marjorie Grober. He said Mrs. Moore, wife of ABCS executive director Don Moore, who died in November 1993, "still has a place in our hearts as we remember her warm spirit."

Miller described the Grobers, who died in a July automobile accident, as "a couple of missionary giants." Grober was the director of the ABCS Brotherhood department and Mrs. Grober was a former five-year president of Arkansas Woman's Missionary Union. Messengers unanimously approved Miller's motion.

News magazine board president Greg Kirksey, pastor of First Church, Benton, recommended that messengers approve changes to the News magazine's articles of incorporation, expanding its

board of directors from nine members to 15 members. The motion, which was approved by messengers, updated the document in keeping with previous convention action approved in 1992 and 1993.

Noble Wiles, pastor of First Church in Ash Flat, recommended that speakers for convention programs and the Arkansas Baptist Pastors' Conference be limited to Southern Baptists.

"I've been going to conventions since 1950 and listened to some solid, sound Southern Baptist speakers," Wiles explained. "We don't want Cooperative Program funds to pay the honorariums of non-Southern Baptist speakers. We are asking the (program) committees to secure only Southern Baptists and Southern Baptist supporters."

Ronnie Floyd, pastor of First Church, Springdale, spoke against the motion. "I would not find that favorable at all," he said. "The Kingdom of God is bigger than the Southern Baptist Convention and there are some fine men who can...stretch us and not bend us."

A proposal that the motion be voted on by ballot was defeated by a show of hands. Wiles' original motion then failed by voice vote.

'Reach People' - a call to action

"Reach People" is more than a concise, catchy slogan. It is an imperative tied directly to the Great Commission which emphasizes that all Christians are to play an active role in leading people to personal faith in Jesus Christ.

As Foreign Mission Board president Jerry Rankin reminded Arkansas Baptists, "The task of going and working in the fields wasn't just for a few disciples...but for every believer in the church. None of us has been exempted from the task."

Highlighting "Reach People" as the theme of the 1994 Arkansas Baptist State Convention, messengers and guests heard sermons, testimonies, reports and long-range goals aimed at moving the theme from anticipation to action.

Arkansas Baptists do reach people. Statistics indicate that several thousand people profess faith in Christ through Arkansas Baptist efforts every year. But reaching people is more than amazing statistics. It requires a personal lifestyle of Christian commitment, compassion and consistency.

Amid all the business and inspiration and words of challenge shared during the annual meeting, the most significant result may be individual decisions to accept the personal challenge to reach people with the life-changing message of the gospel.

In addition to the focus on reaching people, Arkansas Baptists took time to adopt an ambitious 1995 Cooperative

STRAIGHT FROM THE EDITOR

By TRENNIS HENDERSON



Program goal of \$16.6 million. Messengers also adopted a resolution reaffirming their commitment to the Cooperative Program and approved a five-year "Arkansas Awakening" emphasis which will highlight annual efforts to Live the Word, Strengthen the Family, Build the Church, Touch the Community and Reach the World.

Even during moments of debate, Arkansas Baptists maintained their commitment to express differences of opinion in Christian love. One such issue concerned Pastors' Conference president Wallace Edgar's decision to invite independent Baptist pastor Jerry Falwell to serve as the conference's closing speaker.

Falwell's presence during the pre-convention gathering prompted one messenger to introduce a motion calling for future program committees of both the state convention and the Pastors'

Conference to invite only Southern Baptist speakers. Setting personal issues aside, messengers rightly decided that duly elected officers have the right to select who appears on their programs.

While Southern Baptist speakers should play prominent roles on our statewide programs, we also realize that Southern Baptists do not have an exclusive corner on biblical truth. Charles Swindoll's message on integrity during last year's Southern Baptist Convention is a prime example of a respected Christian leader sharing a timely message with Southern Baptists.

Of course, with right comes responsibility, and it is appropriate for program leaders to give serious consideration to the many gifted Southern Baptists who are available to deliver words of challenge and inspiration. SBC president Jim Henry's announcement that Billy Graham has accepted his invitation to preach during next year's SBC annual meeting is a classic example of recruiting a fellow Southern Baptist who can gain a hearing from all segments of Southern Baptist life.

As Arkansas Baptists look to the future, it is imperative that we continue working together with Christlike conviction and cooperation to reach people around us with the good news of the gospel. The 1994 state convention was a positive step in equipping Arkansas Baptists for that task.

Convention combines inspiration, worship, business

Arkansas Baptists once again demonstrated their magnanimous spirit and conducted their business in a way that would honor the Lord and edify the body. The annual convention business was interspersed with inspiration and worship experiences that resulted in almost everyone going home with a good feeling. Admittedly, the goal may not be a "good feeling" but numerous people said they felt like they had been to a "revival."

Everything was done decently and in order. That does not happen without an enormous amount of planning and preparation. Planning and preparation alone can't make it happen. Unless God is active in the planning, preparation and execution of the plans, we are "out of business." Every session of the convention was attended by the manifest presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. He alone is to be credited and praised for the convention, though He used a host of His people as willing servants to make it happen.

Immanuel was just tremendous in their

YOU'LL BE GLAD TO KNOW

By DON MOORE
ABSC Executive Director



hosting of the convention. Their new and expanded facilities were perfect for the many meetings that were conducted. Their pastor, staff and many volunteers who assisted made things run smoothly. All of those things add to the attitude of messengers at a convention. We are grateful.

President Ronnie Rogers and our staff worked extremely hard to offer to you and

to the Lord a worthy program that would honor Him. I believe it did.

The reports given indicated strong evidence that God has been at work. The plans revealed indicate that we expect Him to do even greater things in the years ahead. We are moving together in directions that have the blessing of God.

With record numbers of missionaries having been appointed this year and with 3,600 prospective missionaries in the process, we face a great challenge. It is a financial challenge. With God having miraculously opened so many doors and with so many people surrendering to the call to go, we face the challenge of financing the expanded work God expects of us. God has a plan. For the individual, the plan is the tithe. For the church, the plan is the Cooperative Program. No church should give less than a tithe to this worldwide missionary effort. And every church should take the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering this season of the year. He is counting on you!

Resolutions affirm CP, sanctity of life

By Trennis Henderson

Editor, Arkansas Baptist

Resolutions concerning Cooperative Program giving, the sanctity of human life and moral issues attracted discussion as Arkansas Baptist messengers adopted 11 resolutions during the closing session of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention.

The resolution reaffirming Cooperative Program giving emphasized "firm support for the Cooperative Program as the exclusive means to fund our mission endeavors and express our resolve to oppose funding schemes and accounting methods by which funds to non-Cooperative Program entities are qualified as Cooperative Program giving."

Mark Porter, pastor of First Church, Murfreesboro, suggested the resolution needed to be more specific concerning the identity of non-CP entities. "I also believe in the autonomy of the local church," he noted. "They should be able to give to whoever they feel God leading them to."

Resolutions committee member Mark Brooks, pastor of Elmdale Church in Springdale, responded, "There is no question what our interest is here. In light of what has recently been done in Texas to redefine what constitutes a Cooperative Program gift...we wanted to simply clarify Cooperative Program gifts are monies given to our longstanding Cooperative Program ministries."

"We are not saying that a church cannot give as they desire to give," Brooks added. "The intent is simply to say what constitutes a Cooperative Program gift." Messengers adopted the resolution by a show of hands with scattered opposition.

The resolution addressing the sanctity of human life specifically stated that "abortion can only be justified if it is absolutely necessary to save the physical life of the mother."

Don Cunningham, pastor of Emmanuel Church in Hot Springs, suggested, "If we're respecting and protecting human life at all stages...we ought to go on record as a convention that we oppose abortion in all aspects."

"If we're going to say that we believe in God and that we're going to leave the miracles up to Him," Cunningham added, "the fetus ought to be saved and if it means the physical life of the mother, let God take care of that."

Resolutions committee chairman Larry Page, executive director of the Arkansas Christian Life Commission, explained, "What we are stating here is if the mother dies, the baby dies and so you lose two lives." The resolution was then adopted as presented.

'Equipping the saints'

A resolution on "equipping the saints on moral issues" called on pastors and teachers "to commit this year to teach our people what we believe as Southern Baptists and why we believe it, on issues such as: gambling, abortion, homosexuality, education, capital punishment, etc."

Jim Gattis, a messenger from Pulaski Heights Church in Little Rock, voiced concern over including education and capital punishment among the resolution's list of moral issues. Describing those two categories as "broad, generic terms," he said education and capital punishment "are not items we have treated about what

we believe as Southern Baptists to the same extent of gambling, abortion and alcohol."

Page agreed that "we probably don't have definitive guidelines on 'what we believe as Southern Baptists on education.'" He added, however, that the CLC has materials expressing Southern Baptist views concerning capital punishment. Gattis' proposal to drop the words "education" and "capital punishment" failed.

Bob Parker, pastor of Mount Vernon Church near Benton, proposed an amendment to include homosexuality "and other perversions" as issues of moral concern, noting "there are many, many other perversions spoken of in the Bible." Parker's amendment was accepted by common consent prior to the resolution's adoption.

Other resolutions paid tribute to the memory of Shirley Moore and Glendon and Marjorie Grober. Mrs. Moore, the wife of state convention executive director Don Moore, died a year ago following an eight-month battle with cancer. The Grobers died in a July car accident. Grober had been ABCS Brotherhood department director and Mrs. Grober had recently completed five years of service as state Woman's Missionary Union president.

A resolution affirming the ministry of mission volunteers expressed "deepest gratitude to all Mission Service Corps, International Service Corps volunteers and Journeymen." It also called on Arkansas Baptists "to include these people in their missionary prayer lists."

Other resolutions adopted by messengers were similar to resolutions adopted each of the past two years, including:

- Opposition to homosexuality as "contrary to biblical standards and fraught with serious spiritual, psychological and physical risks."

- Opposition to pornography and support for "the prosecution of producers and sellers of such pornography."

- Support of a proposed administrative license revocation law and other measures "which will further prohibit, limit, regulate or discourage the irresponsible behavior" associated with the use of alcohol and illicit drugs.

- Opposition to efforts to "permit casino gambling, establish a statewide lottery or authorize any other forms of gambling" in Arkansas.

- Appreciation to convention officers, program committee members and Immanuel Church for their contributions to the success of the 1994 ABCS annual meeting.



State convention executive director Don Moore presents a plaque to the children of Glendon and Marjorie Grober in memory of their parents' contributions to Arkansas Baptist ministry. Messengers also adopted a resolution honoring the Grobers who died in a July automobile accident.

'Examine motives,' Hill challenges Arkansas Baptists

Emphasizing that "everything we've done will come under the eyes of Jesus," Junior Hill addressed messengers during the opening session of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention Nov. 1. Hill, a vocational evangelist from Hartselle, Ala., noted that "the Apostle Paul says everyone is going to be summoned to an hour of reckoning."

Citing 1 Corinthians 3:12-16, Hill said Christians need to build spiritual houses out of gold, silver and precious stones rather than wood, hay or straw. "The apostle Paul said that we're going to have a revelation of our motives," Hill continued. "At the judgment seat, our motives will be revealed."

"Why is it that you're doing what you're doing in the work of the Lord?" he asked. "Our biggest challenge is the refining of our motives.... Unless you're full of the Holy Spirit, your motives will corrupt you."

Hill explained that in the days of James, the religious order was built on praise. "They were so bound by praise that they couldn't be saved.... They loved the praise of men more than the praise of God."

Describing major tests in the lab of Christianity, Hill said the first test is that of obscurity. "Are you willing to serve God if nobody knows?" he asked. The second test is that of prominence. "Every man and woman of God has to pass the test of prominence.... A lot are unable to handle people boasting and bragging on their work," he explained. "He that would be the first must be servant." The third test is that of suffering. "You have to go through the valley of affliction, suffering and hard times," Hill declared.

Methodology is the difference between a foundation laid of proper and improper materials, Hill noted. "Are you using carnal methodology?" he asked. "Sometimes when we change methods, we change the message.... We need to replace listless methodology with old-time preaching and bow before the Word."

"What we need is a generation of old-time, on-fire preachers — men of God who can rest sufficient in God's sovereignty," Hill emphasized. "Because at the judgment, we'll be judged with how much we've done with how much we have."

Moore emphasizes ministry goals are dependent on God

By Colleen Backus

Assistant Editor, Arkansas Baptist

Evaluating the convention theme, "Reach People," Don Moore, executive director of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention, warned messengers that "we are not ready to proceed with our goal" of reaching people for Christ.

"I have been in dialogue with deity about our objective for this coming year," he explained. "As noble as our goal is, salvation belongs to the Lord.... It will not come about because of our efforts, but by the supernatural power of God."

"No one will buy into the gospel unless there is divine intervention," Moore continued. "How can we get in position to meet our goal of reaching people?"

First, he noted, "some personal and corporate agonizing needs to take place." Nehemiah wept and mourned, prayed and fasted, Moore pointed out. These were emotional responses to existing conditions and the Master saw something tremendous going on inside of Nehemiah.

"The people and places of God are in shambles and God's people are responsible for their pitiful plight, just as in Nehemiah's day," Moore said. As a result of existing conditions, there was agonizing, he noted. "There must come a time like I remember as a kid, with farmers standing at evening revival services, calling specific names."

There is an embarrassing impotence within the body of Christ, Moore declared. "Even the pagan world is appalled.... Easy compromise, unchanged lives, sham, show, sloughing off — these are the things that seem to bother the Lord."

Referring to Malachi 1, Moore noted that one way God shows His displeasure is by rejecting ineffectual service.

Another issue that should be agonized over is earthly attitudes, he pointed out. Earthly attitudes cause bitterness, envy and strife, Moore explained. In contrast, "Wisdom from above is pure, peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, merciful and has no hypocrisy."

"Most of us don't see as God sees or feel as God feels," Moore acknowledged. "There needs to be some agonizing."

Second, he said, "Doctrinal and practical stabilizing needs to take place," adding that two critical doctrines are the depravity of man and salvation.

Evaluating the depravity of man, Moore noted that many people "doubt the lostness of man." Citing Psalm 39:5, Isaiah 64 and Ephesians 2, Moore explained that all these

scriptures are diametrically opposed to universalism tendencies. "It is an alarming attitude that somehow all will be saved," Moore emphasized forcefully. "Hell is not too severe a penalty — men love darkness because their deeds are evil."

"There is little consistent effort today to win the lost," he continued, "because society teaches us not to acknowledge sin. We're on a mission to build self-esteem, and there is little chance for old-fashioned repentance."

Concerning the doctrine of salvation, Moore reminded Arkansas Baptists that spiritual intervention comes only from God through Jesus. "No other hope exists," he pointed out. "No souped up effort or renewal, but getting into position for God to do His thing through us."

"You are not ready to reach people until you accept the dreadful condition of the lost and the power of God to change them," he said.

A call to evangelize

Third, Moore noted, "There needs to be general and specific evangelizing." Drawing from personal experience, Moore recounted a recent trip to Jackson County, Iowa, where he conducted a personal mission project. "I couldn't understand why I wanted to go as a layperson. I wanted to start a church — to meet local officials and to let them know that Southern Baptists are decent folks," he recalled. "I have found no greater needs anywhere. Nobody went with me, there was no one to show me around. I wanted to know what would come out of this heart if there wasn't anybody expecting it," Moore continued. "It was a blessing to me, after having spent my life being accountable to be people around me.... The feeling was wonderful."

Selective evangelism is foreign to the gospel, Moore noted. "Evangelism must be directed to all, even though many will never believe."

"Casual evangelism will never get the job done!" he emphasized. "Accidental evangelism is unworthy of Jesus."

"God has His scope on you," he pointed out. "I think He told me we're not ready. What does He see? Mediocrity, dullsville. Have you rejected all evangelism as unacceptable in today's world?"

"Our hearts must burn, then He will reach people through Arkansas Baptists. With agonizing, stabilizing and evangelizing — then next year will be awesome."

'The Greatest Command Under Siege'

By Ronnie Rogers

President, Arkansas Baptist State Convention

It is Tuesday of the Passion Week and the Pharisees have attempted to entrap our Lord Jesus concerning the poll tax. The Sadducees have attempted to entrap Him concerning the resurrection.

Now a scribe comes to test Him concerning which is the greatest command. And one of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" (Matt. 22:35-36).

The scribes were experts in the application of the Mosaic Law. Some Pharisees taught the equality of all commands, but most taught distinctions between light and heavy, great and small. Judaism taught there were 613 commands, one for each letter of the Ten Commandments. These were subdivided into the more or less important, known as the fathers. Their descendants, or derivatives, were known as the Halakah. Jesus also recognized distinctions in the law like in Matthew 23:23, "the weightier provision of the law." The scribes request an answer to the question: "Which is the greatest commandment of all?"

First and foremost: "And He said to him, you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the great and foremost commandment" (Matt. 22:37-38).

The word for love is *agape*. This is used interchangeably with *phileo* but it clearly denotes a self-sacrificing, measurable, demonstrative love whether it is from God to us (John 3:16); from us to each other (1 Corinthians 13:1); or from us to God (John 14:25). *Agape* love is from God and affects the intellect, emotion and will. 1 John 4:8 says, "God is *agape*." The greatest commandment is to love God with His love which necessitates the new birth where God places His nature in us. We are to love Him with all of our heart, all of our soul and all our mind. This is impossible on our own. Using the word "all" three times emphatically precludes: Raising a hand and not following through; saying "I'm saved and not serving"; and singing "Oh, how I love Jesus" and not serving Him.

It precludes any notion of accepting Jesus as Savior and not Lord which is as impossible as accepting Him as Christ and not King, man and not God, priest and not prophet, servant and not Savior. It precludes every form of easy believism which stops short of a supernaturally changed life where God's love is shed abroad in our hearts. We are commanded to love the Lord God unreservedly with all that we have and are. And to love the Lord God is to love Him with His love flowing through and from us.

My brothers, don't ever be ashamed of



calling people to a total, 100 percent commitment. The Bible clearly commands for us to, and to do less is to become editors, not messengers. You say no one can do that. That's right. But with God living in and through us supplying us with an infinite proportion of His love, we can by God's grace.

This is the greatest command because: God deserves to be first. It is a prerequisite to be able to fulfill any other command in all of the Word of God.

The second and subordinate command: The second is like it, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets" (Matt. 22:39-40).

The first command sums up the first four commands of the Ten Commandments and the second sums up the last six commandments. The first command is, "Love the Lord God." Then how do we do that is "with all your heart, all of your soul, and all of your mind."

The second command is "love your neighbor." The answer to how we do that is "as yourself." We clothe, educate, nurture and medicate ourselves. Love of oneself is a self-evident truth. The way you can tell if you are loving others as you love yourself is if you will do for them what you do for yourself. Hear me—loving yourself is a given, not a separate command. Nor is it a requirement to be able to fully love others. The requirement to be able to love others is to first love God, and with His love flowing through us we can love others. The greatest command is for us to love God totally, and that is the greatest need that man has.

Secular psychology, with its atheistic presuppositions, relentlessly assails the greatest command and man's greatest need with false ideas like, "Man must love himself before he can truly love others." Hence, man's greatest need is self-esteem.

Let me quote some secular psychiatrists and psychologists: Eric From: "Self love can't be separated from love and understanding of others." Bussacglin: "To love others we must

first love ourselves." He describes this as "discovery of the true wonder of you." Psychologist Gerald Corey: "Unless we learn how to love ourselves, we'll encounter difficulties in loving others....We can't very well give to others what we don't possess ourselves." Carl Rogers, the father of client-centered counseling, taught that man is his own redeemer. All man needs to do is to self-actualize which means to let the real you emerge.

Secular psychologists postulated the self-love doctrine, Christian psychologists adopted it, preachers promoted it and people believed and practiced it.

The doctrine of self-love is from the garbage heap of hell, and yet Christian psychologists and psychiatrists continue to promote it. One Christian psychiatrist says, "Psychiatric practice bears out Scripture on two important points: You cannot truly love others until you learn to love yourself in a healthy way and lack of self-worth is the basis of most psychological problems."

So the crux of all our problems is low self-esteem. The first one to say that we don't love our neighbor because we don't love ourselves—at least in this modern era—is a nihilistic existentialist 19th century German philosopher named Friedrich Nietzsche whose starting point was the non-existence of God. He promoted and popularized the phrase "God is dead" and we have adopted it.

Then we have people in the name of Jesus Christ with vast audiences like Robert Schuller who says, "Reformation theology failed to make clear that the core of sin is a lack of self-esteem." The Old Testament, in Jesus Christ, and the church for 19 centuries taught that murder, lying, stealing are products of self love and the answer was to fall in love with Jesus Christ. Now, we are told it is a lack of self esteem and we need to fall in love with ourselves.

Beloved, the idea that Scripture suggests man's greatest need is more self-love is an assault on the truth. In order to prove their doctrine of self-love, they use only one Scripture because there is only one Scripture in all the Word of God which may seem to teach self-love, and then only if you don't read it.

To prove their doctrine they must:

■ Distort it contextually. They say the key to loving others is to fall in love with yourself. They ignore the preceding and premiere command to love God with all of our heart, with all of our soul, and with all of our mind. That is the prerequisite to be able to love others. We cannot love others until we love God totally and His love pours through us to others. One Christian psychiatrist said, "Those two commandments are best understood in reverse order. People are capable

of love in proportion to their love of themselves." God help us—the reason the church has been in darkness for 2,000 years is because we didn't know until the pundents came along that the Holy Spirit not only failed to make it a command, but He placed it in the wrong order. I don't know about you, but I'm siding with the Holy Spirit. I think He didn't make it a command because He didn't want it to be a command. And I think He put it in the right order because loving others is not dependent on loving ourselves, but loving God.

■ Distort it grammatically. This is *agape* love from God. It is the love that God sheds abroad in our heart. And they make a sacrificial, self-serving love to be self-serving love and a selfless love to be a selfish love.

■ Distort it historically. This, according to verse 40, sums up the Law and the Prophets. The Old Testament was never given to promote self-love but to control self-love.

■ Distort it syntactically. They make an adverbial modifier "as yourself" a command and it is not. In reality, self-love in the text is a given; it is a self-evident truth.

■ Distort it analogically. When you compare the self-love doctrine with other Scripture, no amount of disclaimer that it is not narcissism results in a scriptural justification of the need for self-love.

John 15:12—"Love one another." John 15:17—"Love one another with lowliness and humility." 1 Thessalonians 3:12—"Lord make you increase and abound in love, one toward another." Romans 13:8—"Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another." Ephesians 4:2—"With all humility and gentleness, with patience showing love." Philippians 2:3—"Let each esteem others better than themselves."

"Let this mind be in you which is in Christ Jesus....He humbled Himself...even to death on the cross." We are never commanded to love ourself but repeatedly told to love others and God.

We will either stand with the modern day pundents preaching self-love or we will stand with the prophets of old and say, "Love the Lord God with all your heart, soul and mind." We must make our choice. Self-love draws a person away from the cross. Loathing yourself draws you to the foot of the cross. For 25 years I was in love with myself and placing goals, values, standards and morals above God's before falling in love with Jesus, and I refuse to go back to self-love.

Paul said, "I am least of the apostles," "chief of sinners," "Oh wretch that I am," "I am nothing." What a pity. If only someone had gotten him to a self-esteem seminar; then maybe he could have gotten over his morbid self image and by per chance God could have used him. In reality, he stood in concert with the godly men of old who stood contrary to the modern love affair with self-confidence, self-assertiveness, self-esteem and self-love.

David said, "What is man that thou art mindful of Him?" Daniel said, "But we are not

presenting our supplication before thee on account of any merits of our own." Abraham said, "I am dust of the ashes." Isaiah said he was "a man of unclean lips." Jeremiah said, "I can't speak." We call him "the weeping prophet." Moses said, "Who am I that I should go?" David said, "My sin is ever before me." John the Baptist's resume said, "A voice crying in the wilderness." He said, "I am unfit to untie His sandal." Then he said, "I must decrease." The leper fell in the dirt at Jesus' feet. The prodigal son said, "I am no longer worthy." Peter said, "Depart from me for I am a sinful man."

If the soothsayers of self-love would have been there, they could have taught them, and Jeremiah could have been known as the "happy" prophet. John the Baptist would have learned to be more political and less prophetic and kept the door open with Herod, but he was caught in that time warp, that old time religion and faithfulness to God, and that God closes doors and no one can open them, and God opens doors and no one can close them.

Have you noticed: The increase in self-love, self-esteem in our churches is accompanied by an increase in ministers diving into sin, evangelical lethargy, and a resistance to sacrifice.

Self-love causes: Missionaries to succumb to homesickness, givers to become grippers, pastors to become hirelings and preachers to lose their prophetic voice.

"We must refuse self-esteem and we must re-enthron Christ-esteem."

If we desire for God to use us we better proclaim love for God with our total being and not for self. Today, there is still no self-esteem at the foot of the cross where sinners lose all their guilty stains. Nor in the worship of the chambers where myriads of angels cry, "Holy, Holy, Holy." Holy men and women of old saw themselves rightly because they saw God visibly or by faith.

Abraham saw Jehovah. Moses was at the burning bush. Ezekiel had numerous visions. Isaiah saw Him "high and lifted up." The disciples saw Jesus on the stormy seas in a new way and they bowed and worshipped Him. Peter saw Him at the transfiguration. Paul saw Him on the Damascus road. John saw Him on the Isle of Patmos and fell as a dead man. When we got saved, we saw God by faith.

How long has it been since you have risen above the mires of human existence and by faith seen our God? Not seeing God work but seeing God in the third Heaven, separated from His universe by a trillion miles in the heavenly chamber of the Holy of Holies, high and lifted up, ruling and reigning from His

regal throne which shines with the brilliance of diamonds and sapphires, where mere man dare not approach, where the sun and the moon do not shine and yet darkness never casts its shadow because the radiance of God's majestic glory illumines all eternity. And there bowed before the splendor of Him who sits upon His stately throne, from whose presence Heaven and earth flee, are four living creatures whose rhythmic cry "Holy, Holy, Holy" echoes through the halls of Heaven for all eternity. And myriads of angels in concert say, "Thou alone art worthy." It is a perfect, palatial picture of eternity. And yet, marred that celestial beauty and splendor is an earthly tree. An old rugged cross, an emblem of suffering and shame. From that cross flows a fount of blood drawn from Emmanuel's veins. But there is power in that blood and it's where sinners lose all their guilty stains. And the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts and then it draws us past the heavenly host into the intimate presence of a holy God. And standing there we say, "What is man that thou art mindful of Him?" "I am a man of unclean lips."

There in the presence of God, we are humble enough to say, "I am the dust of the ashes. We are secure enough to say, "I must decrease." We are willing enough to say, "Here I am, send me."

Then we will be like others with low self-esteem like Abraham who would sacrifice his son. Moses who would lead the people of God. Nathan who would stand before the king and say, "Thou art the man." Jeremiah who was faithful although not fruitful. The three Hebrews who would rather fry in the fire than forsake God. John the Baptist who would confront the king. The centurion who would see his son healed and the leper who would be cleansed. The prodigal son who would be welcomed by the father and Paul, although nothing, would be used of God to write half of the New Testament. "I must decrease that He might increase. If I be lifted up I will draw all men unto me."

I must decrease that He might increase. We as men and women of God must refuse self-esteem and we must re-enthron Christ-esteem. We must refuse self-love and recapture what it means to die to self and to take up our cross. We must by faith see a vision of God, high and lifted up. And say, Lord, here am I, send me, and when God sends us there is no need for self-love or self-confidence or self-assertiveness training because when God sends us, God will go with us. And when God is there, there is a strength in weakness, a light in darkness, a Savior on the stormy seas and a place in Potapher's palace. And when God is with you and Satan hurls his fiery darts, like the fiery dart of loneliness, the Prince of Peace will be on the Isle of Patmos. The dart of doubt, there will be a ram in the thicket. The dart of discouragement, there will be lions before you who can live without you and the dart of fear, there will be a fourth one in the fire who does not burn.

Rankin: 'We have been called to go and work in the fields'

Jerry Rankin, president of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board, reminded Arkansas Baptists that "we have been called to go and work in the fields."

Speaking during the closing session of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention annual meeting, Rankin preached from Matthew 21, the parable of two sons whose father asked them to work in his fields. One son said he would go, but did not, and the other son said he would not, but later did.

"Like the two sons, we have been called to go and work in the fields," Rankin said. "The call is unmistakable. The call is clear."

Emphasizing that the call is for "everyone," he added, "The task of going and working in the fields wasn't just for a few disciples—a group of us that feels called to foreign missions—but to every believer in the church. None of us has been exempted from the task."

Rankin said many believers resemble the two sons. "We will say we'd go and then not go or we will be like the second son and say we will not go but then go later and say, 'I will work in the fields.'"

Reviewing the growth of Southern Baptist foreign missions, Rankin noted,

"We appointed a record 498 foreign missionaries last year. This year, we will surpass 500 appointments and...4,000 missionaries in the field."

Rankin cited volunteer missions as another example of foreign missions growth "Just this summer 195 Southern Baptist volunteers went to Albania to show the Jesus film. Over 20,000 viewed that film. The next day 1,600 people returned and said, 'I want to study the Bible and learn about Jesus Christ.'"

He told of visiting countries and people groups newly opened to Southern Baptist mission efforts. "I would like to think that these open areas were the result of a clever foreign missions strategy, but it is the act of God," he affirmed. "God is breaking down the barriers."

"God is calling us to work in those fields, to be the ones to reach those people for the Lord," Rankin declared. "We have seen baptisms across the world exceed a quarter million. I believe we are approaching the day when we will be unable to track the reports and the statistics of people coming to know the Lord."

Emphasizing that God "is still calling," Rankin said there is a commitment to be



Foreign Mission Board president Jerry Rankin urges Arkansas Baptists to "work in the fields" for God.

made, a cost to be paid and a compromise to evade.

"God has given us the invitation to go work in the fields, placed in our hands the means to harvest and the potential within our lives to not be like the first son, who says he will go, but never opens his life to the possibility," Rankin concluded.

"Will we be like the second son who says, 'I will go work in the fields?'"

CP breakfast highlights video, missions

More than 150 Arkansas Baptist leaders, gathered for an annual Cooperative Program breakfast at Immanuel Church in Little Rock prior to the Wednesday morning session of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention. Participants heard a message from Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board president Jerry Rankin and previewed a new CP promotional video.

Jimmie Sheffield, ABCS associate executive director, said participants included pastors of churches "leading in various categories of Cooperative Program giving, agency leaders, furloughing missionaries and executive board staff."

"The breakfast was designed to say a word of appreciation to those churches that are tops in these categories," Sheffield explained, "and as a means of information and education about CP ministries in-state and worldwide, and as an inspiration to continue missions support."

Participants previewed the video, "Just Down the Street," which promotes the work of the Cooperative Program and its worldwide impact. It was the video's first showing in Arkansas.

The video featured stark evangelism statistics. "There is an estimated 181 million non-Christians in the United States and 1 billion in the world," the narrator explained.

It also featured clips and interviews about Southern Baptist mission work around the world. Southern Baptists currently have approximately 4,000 foreign missionaries in 130 countries and 5,000 home missionaries in the U.S.

The video will be distributed free to all directors of missions and is available for purchase by churches for \$7 per tape through the Southern Baptist Stewardship Commission at 901 Commerce St., Nashville, TN 37203-9407.

Rankin also highlighted the impact of the Cooperative Program as he told participants, "God is moving in ways we cannot comprehend. God is on a roll."

He detailed how Southern Baptists' ability to reach out through foreign missions has historically been hampered by lack of funds.

"From 1861-1943, the Foreign Mission Board worked in indebtedness," he said. "Time and time again, the proposals were made to open new doors and we couldn't. We were paralyzed."

He also emphasized the need for increased priority in missions funding. "When I hear someone say that Bold Mission Thrust has lost its drive, I know I'm hearing a person focused on programs and not the sovereign power of God."

"Last year, we saw 2,000 new churches" for a total of 35,000 churches overseas, he said. "We appointed 498 foreign missionaries last year and this year we will surpass 500 appointments. We can have 5,000 missionaries by the year 2000...easily."

Rankin said he highlighted the numbers to emphasize that "our budget next year is \$186 million. If we grow at the same rate, it will be \$266 million in 1999."

"Is that a challenge?" he asked. "No. That's only 4 percent of the receipts of Southern Baptist churches. It would not even entice an economic miracle."

He urged Arkansas Baptists to "focus on God's purpose" as Paul did. "God's purpose will be fulfilled. I don't believe God has blessed Southern Baptists only to deny them the opportunity to reach the world."

Evaluating Cooperative Program budget planning, he added, "We often struggle with what it costs. Remember, God's work in God's way will never lack for God's supply."

Elliff assesses 'what's right with the church'

"What's right with the church?" Tom Elliff asked Arkansas Baptists during his recent message at the Arkansas Baptist State Convention annual meeting. Elliff, an Arkansas native and pastor of First Southern Baptist Church of Del City, Okla., spoke during the convention's Tuesday afternoon session.

Preaching from Acts 4, Elliff said, "It's time we told the world what is right with the church" instead of focusing on what is wrong with it. He described four "rights" of the church to proclaim the gospel, including:

■ The integrity of our Master. "We live in a generation that seems to be the saddest in regard to the failure of men in the pulpit," Elliff said. "It never ceases to shock me that men of God would fail morally when the world needs an example.

"In our church, we have the integrity of the Master. You never need worry that there will be a scandal with the Lord Jesus," Elliff noted. "Jesus is one man who has impeccable character."

■ The importance of our message. "Jesus - we can be saved by that name. That's exciting," Elliff said.

"It is an exclusive way," he added. "Jesus is the only way. Not just a good way, not just the preferred way, but the only way."

Detailing the gospel's importance, Elliff added, "There is not a meeting taking place more important than the one here today - the one that says Jesus is the only way."

■ The impact of our ministry. Recalling Jesus' disciples, Elliff said, "These were men who were nobodies, but with Jesus, they could be somebodies."

He told of a young girl in a bus ministry of a church he had previously served as pastor. He said the girl, a daughter of alcoholics, was picked up each week by the bus ministry and taken to church. "It was the only time of week that she was somebody to anybody," he said.

"She is just a few months away from graduating at the top of her class in college," he said. "Jesus can take a nobody and make a somebody."

■ The inspiration of our mission. Pointing to the example of Peter and John, Elliff said, "People that genuinely know Christ can't help but tell the fact that Jesus is the only way."



Children's Home residents present a cake honoring the ministry's century of service.

Birthday celebration highlights Children's Homes centennial

The Arkansas Baptist Children's Homes and Family Ministries celebrated its 100th birthday during the Tuesday evening session of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention with a 100-voice children's choir, a slide presentation, a sermon from Mississippi pastor Frank Pollard and, of course, a cake.

The report began with the strains of "Jesus Loves the Little Children," "Jesus Loves Me" and other popular children's hymns sung by a 100-voice choir of children in grades 4-6 from across central Arkansas. The choir concluded its performance by singing "Happy Birthday to You" as residents of the Arkansas Baptist Children's Home in Monticello presented a three-layer birthday cake to convention messengers and participants.

Also featured during the report was a slide presentation showcasing the history and continuing ministry of the ABCHFM. The presentation highlighted the ministry's beginning as an orphanage on land donated by Hannah Hyatt, a Baptist woman in Monticello in 1894. It has since become a statewide ministry spanning 22 locations, ministering to more than 4,600 Arkansans annually and providing residence space for nearly 600 children and youth.

The slide presentation also highlighted the variety of ABCHFM ministries, including: Promise House in El Dorado, a home for unwed mothers; the Arkansas Baptist Boys' Ranch in Harrison, for boys with chemical addictions; the Arkansas Baptist Children's Home in Monticello; the ministry's emergency receiving home system and area satellite counseling services.

Participants also heard ABCHFM executive director Johnny Biggs say, "Thank you, Arkansas Baptists, for a

century of loving support of the least of these.

"Our founding fathers sought God's will to reach out and provide a home for orphaned children," Biggs noted. "It is the same truth that motivates us to minister today. We provided direct care for 569 children and youth last year.

"What a joy to see them respond to the love and care," Biggs added. "As needs continue to multiply, Arkansas Baptists are seeing these needs as opportunities to reach out and minister."

Frank Pollard, pastor of First Baptist Church in Jackson, Miss. said, "I'm here tonight just to say one thing - to congratulate Arkansas Baptists on giving 100 years of service to those who would not have gotten it anywhere else."

Preaching from Exodus 11, Pollard said that "every time people cry out for help, God's answer is God's people. When the Israelites cried out, God said, 'Moses, you are my answer.'"

Paraphrasing the conversation between God and Moses, Pollard noted that Moses asked: "Lord, who am I? Lord, what will I say?"

"Tell them I sent you," Pollard recounted.

"Lord, what do I do?" Moses asked.

"Whatever I call you to do, you can do," was God's answer, Pollard affirmed.

"It goes on through history," Pollard pointed out. "God says, 'I have seen your suffering, I have heard your cries, I am concerned and I will come,' and He sends someone who is willing.

"One hundred years ago, children without homes cried out to God and God said, 'I've seen, I hear, I am concerned. Hannah Hyatt, come here. You are my answer.'"

'Spiritual Awakening: America's Only Hope'

By Cliff Palmer

President, Church Growth Concepts

I want to speak on a subject that is very, very heavy upon my heart. I want to speak to you on "Spiritual Awakening: America's Only Hope." I feel very strongly that unless we experience a spiritual awakening, and that very soon, our nation as we have known it is gone. Spiritual awakening is not a hope or one of our hopes or even our best hope. It is our only hope.

I will base what I have to say primarily from the book of Isaiah. However, such verses as Psalm 9:17, "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all nations that forget God," and Proverbs 14:34, "Righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people," are pertinent to what I want to say.

The Isaiah passages fit so well for two reasons. For one thing, through Isaiah the prophet, God is addressing a nation, the nation Israel. Secondly, there are so many parallels to be drawn between the nation of Israel and our own. For example, Israel had known God and had been signally blessed by God. America has known God and has been blessed of God above all nations of the world.

What many seemingly are ignorant of, or for whatever reason, refuse to admit, is that this country was born in a time of great spiritual awakening. Also, I think we need to be reminded that during or immediately following every great battle and test for American liberties, there has always been a spiritual awakening or revival. It was this underlying and sometimes almost hidden spiritual power that kept our nation from going down in defeat time and time again. What many fail to realize is that more than 100 years before the signing of the Declaration of Independence, Baptists were being banished from Massachusetts, beaten publicly in Boston, and maligned in Virginia because of their stand for absolute freedom of worship and separation of church and state. Men such as Roger Williams and John Clark, both Baptist preachers, laid their lives on the line for what they believed. Heaven alone will reveal the impact these and many others made upon our country.

Something else that we need to remember is that after every trial or test America has passed through, not only has there been a spiritual awakening, but God has in every instance had a man through whom that spiritual awakening came.

At the time of the signing of the Declaration of Independence it was George Whitfield. Closely related to those war time years of 1775-1783 were the mighty revivals of John and Charles Wesley.

In 1812 we found ourselves again at war with the British. The years that followed were years of depression, spiritual decline and moral decay. The gospel was mocked and preachers ridiculed. Onto the scene came an Elijah or a John the Baptist came Charles

Grandison Finney. It was reported that in one year's time 100,000 were won to Christ and baptized in New York state alone.

And so it has continued, the Civil War days 1860-1865 and the years that followed were lifted from defeat and despair under the ministry of Dwight L. Moody.

In 1917-1918 we found ourselves in World War I, a war that threatened everything we hold dear. But again, God had a man. Billy Sunday and other so-called lesser lights such as Mordecai Ham were mightily used of God, and revivals swept our land, and our freedoms were saved once more.

Now beloved, I want you to hear what I'm about to say. In my lifetime, we have been through World War II, the Korean War, the Vietnam conflict, and more recently, Desert Storm, and yet no spiritual awakening, and more, and who and where is the man God will use to bring us back to Himself? It is as if God has removed Himself from the scene. There is no voice calling America back to God.

Can it be that the patience of God has come to an end? Some think so. I heard John McArthur say not long ago, "God is not going to judge America. He has already judged America, and has taken His hand off of her, and is letting her go." He said, "There is no way to explain the rampant immorality in this country apart from the fact that God has said to America, 'Alright, you want it your way, you've got it.'" Then he said, "Read Romans 1."

"The most pressing need in the church today is for the leaders to fall in love all over again with Jesus."

Now I come to Isaiah 1:4. Here God does an interesting thing. He pictures the nation of Israel as a human body eaten up with a cancerous disease. What an apt description of America! America, like Israel, is sick in her thinking. Just how sick are we in this country? The FBI estimates that 83 percent of Americans will be victims of crime at some point in their lives. America has the most violent crimes of any nation in the world. From 1976 to 1993 more people were murdered in the U.S. than died on battlefields in World War II. Pornography has grown from \$1 billion to \$10 billion in revenues since 1970. America has become the most drunken, drugged, divorced, and now the largest debtor nation in the world.

William Buckley in his April 12, 1993, syndicated column said, "Thirty years ago, one in every 40 white children was born to an unmarried mother; today it is one in five.

Among blacks, two of three children are born to an unmarried mother." The American Health Association reports that 2.5 million teenagers contract a sexually transmitted disease every year; right now as schools are devoting more time to sex education. The truth is, before sex education began in the '60s, teenage pregnancies were declining. After sex education began, the rates skyrocketed. That ought to tell us something. Fifteen million children are growing up without fathers. Listen to this - 420,000 children are raped every year in this country. And we must never forget that we continue to brutally slaughter one-and-a-half million babies every year by abortion (35 million since 1973). Personally, I like the sign that says, "It's not a choice, it is a child." Can you believe that we have reached such a low point morally that the Surgeon General of this country would say, and I quote, "We must get over our love affair with the fetus." I heard another woman recently, a leader of a feminist group, say, "We must forget these fetuses," now listen, "and take care of our children." Would someone please inform these women that they were once a fetus. As former fetuses we should all be offended by such irresponsible, ignorant remarks.

A further indication of the sick thinking of this country is seen in its attitude toward homosexuality. Who would ever have believed that we would see the day in America when that which God calls an abomination worthy of death would be condoned and actually encouraged by some as an alternative lifestyle. May I remind us all that God created Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve. It is unthinkable to me that the sin for which God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah could become acceptable in American society.

According to the Associated Press, the present presidential administration has appointed 30 homosexuals and lesbians to governmental positions. Of course, they tell us and expect us to believe that 10 percent of the population of this country is homosexual. If I have learned anything about the devil, it is that he is a liar. I have an idea that the truth is that 1 percent or less is homosexual. But, let me share something that boggles my brain. A handful of sodomites, (that's what God calls them), have come out of the closet and have marched on this nation's capital and literally have turned it on its ear. What do you think would happen if the 90 million evangelical Christians in this country would come out of our closets and declare who we are, the children of God, and we are out to take our country back for our God. Enough is enough! America has a terminal illness. It is called sin. And apart from divine intervention by the Great Physician, we are about to become nothing more than another Third World country.

I believe God has been and continues sending wake-up calls to America. I believe the plague of AIDS is God's judgment on the

sexual promiscuity and perversion of this nation. The floods, the fires, the earthquakes, the record-breaking cold and heat, all of this is God saying, "America, you had better wake up." Now, I'm well aware that few if any are listening, but I believe this is about to change. When God sends His judgment upon America's god of money and the things that money will buy, when we wake up one of these mornings, and everything we have sold our souls for materially is gone, I promise you God will have our attention.

In Isaiah 5, with fire in His eyes, God pronounces judgment upon the six sins that brought Israel down as a nation. Listen to these six "woes" and see if they don't remind you of our own pitiful nation. By the way, the word "woe" doesn't mean, "Shame on you." It is a pronouncement of judgment.

The first sin that evoked the judgment of God was the sin of greed and covetousness. Verse 8 is God's description of a people that turned inward, ignoring the hurting masses around them. It is a picture of big business eating up "the little man," not caring who gets hurt in the process. In America our business philosophy has become, "Get all you can, can all you get, and sit on the lid." This is a dog-eat-dog world. The rich get richer, and the poor get poorer, but who cares?

The second sin was the sin of drunkenness and sinful pleasure on a national scale. What a portrait of drunken, pleasure-mad America. Two hundred thousand alcohol-related deaths last year, and we ban tobacco advertising. How stupid. The politicians won't touch the liquor issue because to take a stand against it would mean political suicide.

The third sin was the sin of blasphemy. Here is a picture of giving oneself in abandonment to sinning without shame or conscience, and daring God to do something about it.

The fourth sin was the sin of confusing moral standards. What an apt description of the humanistic philosophy rampant in our land. Humanism is an outright denial of the Lordship of Jesus Christ and the Sovereignty of God. No wonder we have lost our way morally in this country. Secular humanism, the new agers are determined to get God out of every segment of our society. As a result of their influence upon government, the government largely says, "Get God out." The Supreme Court says, "Get God out." Godless organizations such as the ACLU and others say, "Get God out." Verse 24 says it all, "Because they have cast away the law of the Lord of hosts, and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel."

The fifth sin was the sin of pride. Israel reached a point where they saw no need for God. America has become a nation of practical atheists. We are not going to deny the existence of God. We're just going to live as if He didn't exist.

The sixth sin was the sin of compromise and perverted justice. This is the sixth and last woe. Here a people became so drunken that they lost their sense of justice. No nation



can long survive that drops so low in morals that it loses its sense of values. And that's where we are in America.

Well, after such a dismal, bleak, even black, foreboding picture, is there any hope? Have we passed the point of no return? Can it be that God has indeed given this nation over to a reprobate mind as is spoken of in Romans 1? Frankly, I don't know. But I can tell you this. Whatever we are going to do to change things must be done quickly. Only God knows what the future holds for this nation, but I believe the decade of the 1990s will determine the future of America.

I used to say our hope is found in II Chronicles 7:14. I must confess, the more I study that verse leaving it in its context, the more I'm convinced it has a particular application to the nation of Israel. I don't believe this land is going to be healed regardless of what we do. Only the coming of Jesus Christ will do that when He comes and creates a new heaven and a new earth. To be sure, we need to humble ourselves, pray, turn from our wicked ways, but somehow I believe this must happen in the context of the church. In other words, "The church must become the church again."

The hope of survival for this nation as we have known it is a purified, powerful, on fire, going, growing church. If our churches do not experience revival during this decade, America will have reached a point from which it cannot recover until after the massive judgment of God is visited upon it.

John Wesley once said, "Give me a hundred men who care for nothing but God, and fear nothing but sin, such alone will shake the gates of hell, and set up the kingdom of God on earth."

I say, Arkansas Baptists, let's do whatever we have to do to present to God 1,300 revived, on fire churches that care for nothing but the souls of men, and fear nothing but the awful consequences if we fail.

Let's admit it, our Sunday Schools are faltering, Discipleship Training is a lost cause in most churches, our soul-winning efforts are pitiful at best. Southern Baptist churches baptized not more than two per church from

the unsaved, the pagan population last year. Pastors are discouraged, church members are frustrated, a lost world is waiting and wondering, and the devil is having a heyday! How long can we continue like this? Do you ever get sick and tired of being sick and tired?

I wish we would stop our frenzied, human manipulation for a while and just go back to the simple basics. I think of the church in the early chapters of the book of Acts, a church that did so much with so little while we're doing so little with so much. How did they do that? Listen, they didn't. God, the Holy Spirit, did it through them. That which is most missing in our churches today is the manifest presence of the Holy Spirit of God. This is our greatest need. Without a demonstration of God's power among us we are done for. We will never make a dent among this hard, cynical, goddess, pleasure-loving, sin-cursed, crippled, paralyzed, proud world apart from the presence and power of the Holy Spirit of God.

I can't help but believe that somehow the pastor, the spiritual leader, is the key to the spiritual awakening that must come. D. L. Moody once said, "If you want revival, build a big fire in the pulpit."

What I am about to say may seem strange from one who has spent the last nine years trying to help churches to get on the grow again. But, after traveling over 200,000 miles and being in over 300 churches, I'm coming to the conclusion that our greatest need is not to know the latest fads relating to church growth, but to know in a deeper and fresh way the Christ whose church it is. The most pressing need in the church today is for the leaders to fall in love all over again with Jesus and sense again the thrill and excitement of our divine call to preach.

My favorite picture of Jesus hasn't been painted yet. It is of Him on the mountain side in Caesarea Philippi. He has just asked his disciples what the people were saying about Him. They replied, "They say you are Elijah or Jeremiah, or another of the prophets." Jesus then asked them, "Who do you say I am?" Peter said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus blessed Peter for His insight, and then Jesus, with all the authority of God in heaven, said, "Upon this rock (the truth that I'm the Christ, the Son of the living God) I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Let us as pastors and laypeople return to our churches and let Him, the Christ, the Anointed One, the Son of the Living God, rebuild our churches upon Himself, not on who and what we are, but on who and what He is. He is our only hope. He is our soon-coming King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

Then the church will become that mighty, moving, militant church Christ designed it to be, and indeed, the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. Spiritual awakening, America's only hope. I am convinced if that awakening comes, it will come from groups just like this. The question is: What are we going to do about it?

Conference speakers highlight evangelism

By Russell N. Dilday

Associate Editor, Arkansas Baptist

Evangelism was the focus of the 1994 Arkansas Baptist Pastors' Conference as speakers highlighted the theme "Reach People: Here's Hope." The conference, held Oct. 31 at First Church, Little Rock, was marked by several sermons from well-known evangelists and pastors, election of officers and keynote speaker Jerry Falwell, pastor of Thomas Road Baptist Church in Lynchburg, Va.

Pastors' Conference president Wallace Edgar, pastor of Trinity Church in Texarkana, said he was "thrilled with the results" of the program. "I think the spirit of the program and its continuity just built from the first sermon in the morning to the closing sermon Monday night."

The conference was punctuated by the high-energy, 85-voice Trinity Church choir, led by Trinity minister of music Chuck Guilbert. Edgar affirmed that the music "has a way of building and strengthening the message."

The morning session sermons featured Brinkley evangelist Johnny Jackson; Earl Duggins, pastor of Forest Hills Baptist Church in Kilgore, Texas; and Bill Eliff, pastor of First Church, Little Rock.

Jackson, preaching from Acts 28, told participants to "preach the Word of God and God will bless you and honor your ministry."

Reviewing the text, Jackson said, "Note the boldness of Paul. God has not called us to be politicians, but prophets. Many times the pulpit...has become a place of silence."

He also urged listeners to "notice Paul's message. He preached to them of Jesus. Is there anything more important or significant than that? We need to talk about Jesus. Paul understood that."

Jackson also called attention to "the source of Paul's preaching. 'Hold yourself to the fire of the Word of God. When we give our opinions, we are on shaky ground, but when we (preach from) the Word of God, we have the authority of God."

"Look at his method," Jackson continued. "He expounded and he testified and he persuaded. That is the proper order of preaching Jesus. Expound it, then testify: 'I believe it.' Then persuade: 'Won't you believe it too?' Dig into the Word of God. Then you can testify."

Finally, he said, see "the resolve of Paul's preaching. Some believed and some didn't. That's going to happen in our ministries, but don't kick yourself because some won't believe. All we can do is...preach the Word of God and God will bless you and honor your ministry."

Duggins, preaching from Mark 2 about

the paralytic brought to Christ by four men, described three elements necessary to evangelism:

■ **The sinner.** "This man is a picture of a sinner and the power of sin," Duggins said. "Never depreciate the power of sin. This man was deprived of his ability to walk. Sin is a subtraction from life. It robs and it steals. We need to paint sin as black and horrible as it is," he urged.

■ **The soul winners.** "One or more of these men had to become concerned for the man who was paralyzed and lost," he suggested. "We always need to be concerned. One also had the common sense to do something about it...and then they cooperated in their evangelistic endeavor. We get that courage at the foot of the cross."

■ **The Savior.** "Spread the news to every land that Jesus saves," Duggins said. "If our sins haven't been forgiven by Jesus, then they just haven't been forgiven."

Eliff, who was not scheduled on the program, replaced Larry Wynn, pastor of Hebron Baptist Church in Dacula, Ga., who was delayed by Atlanta-area traffic.

Eliff told listeners of pastors who had been used by God, but are now "estranged" from God. "What happened? These were men who sat where you sit, but something happened to them that aborted God's plan for their lives."

Preaching from II Peter 1, Eliff told participants Christians must continually grow. "We must ascend the steps of godliness in this life.

"What does it take for us to be used of God?" he asked. In response, he said, God's power "granted us godliness. Everything we need, God has provided."

He said God also "has granted us His

magnificent promises. This book," he said, holding up a Bible, "has hundreds and hundreds of promises He makes. If you will come and partake of these promises, you will become a partaker of the divine nature of God."

For that reason, Eliff added, "it just takes away all of our excuses." Reading from the text, Eliff said he found in verses 5-6 seven attributes we must have if we are not going to stumble: faith, goodness, moral excellence, knowledge, self-control, perseverance and godliness.

During the afternoon session, participants elected officers and heard speakers Junior Hill, a Hartselle, Ala., evangelist; Wynn, who had arrived from Georgia; and Sam Cathey, pastor of Graceway Baptist Church in Oklahoma City.

Elected as president of the 1995 Pastors' Conference was Grant Ethridge, pastor of First Church, Lavaca. Re-elected to second terms were vice president Gary Pridmore, pastor of Beryl Church in Vilonia, and secretary Joe Bagwell, pastor of Mt. Ida First Church.

Hill, who used II Timothy 2 as his text, warned that the "threats Paul warned Timothy about are very present dangers for us today." He said those dangers include:

■ **The danger of unexpected troubles.** "Remember that you are going to endure hardness," Hill predicted. "The Word of God makes it clear that they that live godly lives will endure troubles. Jesus didn't call us to a bed of ease. He called us to hardships. It's not an easy job to be a man of God."

■ **The danger of recognized success.** Hill used Paul's military analogy, quoting, "Therefore endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ." You are in the army



Pastors' Conference participants elected Grant Ethridge (right), pastor of First Church, Lavaca as president of the 1995 Pastors' Conference. Re-elected to second terms were vice president Gary Pridmore (center), pastor of Beryl Church in Vilonia, and secretary Joe Bagwell (left), pastor of Mt. Ida First Church.

of the Lord and therefore don't get to see the overall picture of the war. I believe most of the greatest victories that you and I have, we never get to see." He warned, however, that "you are not to be intimidated by your situation or your evaluation."

■ The danger of unintended substitutes. "I want to be honest with you," he told listeners. "Sometimes I get tired. Sometimes I don't like my trench. If God designs you for a 36-inch trench, don't you ever be intimidated and don't worry about getting out of your trench."

Wynn told participants, "We all get discouraged. We lose about 1,500 pastors in the (Southern Baptist) convention each year. I want to share...a message of how to continue when you'd like to quit."

Preaching from Acts 4, he offered several principles to guide pastors. "View obstacles as opportunities," Wynn said, adding that "the difference is our attitude toward a situation."

He told listeners to "find your security. Jesus Christ can be your security today, my friend, and when all else crumbles, Jesus Christ is alive."

Wynn also emphasized that "our lives must be controlled by convictions. What are the convictions in your life? Your relationship with Jesus Christ? We must preach by conviction and not convenience. If some of you preach Jesus, it's going to cost you the church you serve."

"Bond with other believers," he said. "Every problem in the New Testament church was handled by a prayer meeting and not a business meeting."

"Search out the secular person," he continued. "God called us into the world as a shining light. If we want to be encouraged, get out among the people of the world and be like Jesus Christ."

Cathey concluded the afternoon session saying, "There's something bad wrong in our churches. We have filled our churches with unregenerate people."

Preaching from 1 John, Cathey said, "God has ordained that saved people abound in good works, yet some of the sorriest, meanest people in the church go to church every time the doors open."

"When you get saved you become a new creation, your whole system of values goes into reversal and you become a new person," explained Cathey, warning that effective ministry is not necessarily judged numerically.

Citing 1 John 3:9 and 4:7, he said, "A person born of God cannot commit a repetitive sin. According to this passage, if the people cannot stop a sin, they are not saved and are going to die and go to hell."

"We've skidmed around it," Cathey said. "We must admit the fact that the majority of members have not been saved because their lives do not reflect" changed lives.

"Be separate and holy," he urged pastors. "We're not going to do any good until we preach the Word of God and do it with a bag packed. Maybe you're not even saved. Maybe you better check."

The conference's final session, which featured messages from Cathey, Ronnie Floyd, pastor of First Church, Springdale; and Falwell, was marred by picketers protesting Falwell's appearance on the program. The small group of protesters were led by W.N. Otwell, an independent Baptist preacher from Texas.

"I thought their role was null and void," Edgar said of the picketers, who marched in front of First Church carrying signs protesting Southern Baptists and Falwell. "I saw no purpose for their being there."

Keys to authentic ministry

Floyd urged pastors to make conscious choices to empower their ministry. "Are you changing your culture or is your culture changing you?" he asked. "We are in a crisis because we do not believe in absolute truth. We have a nation which is biblically illiterate."

"There is such a thing as right and wrong," he insisted. "The challenge before us is reaching this unique culture and making a difference in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ....When you make a poor choice, you limit your spiritual power."

Floyd said "real authentic ministry" occurs when a church "is empowered by the Holy Spirit and is filled with love and hope and peace and faith." He said keys to authentic ministry include spending time with God every day, ministering in the Spirit of God, nurturing one's family spiritually, standing for God in today's culture and paying the price for a great ministry.

"Your ministry will never be any greater than your personal walk with Jesus Christ," Floyd said. "This is no time for neutrality. Be a warrior, not a wimp."

Cathey challenged pastors to "be different" in serving the Lord. Preaching from Hebrews 11, he said, "What our culture needs are preachers that are different than other men — men that are men's men, not a bunch of sissies...so different that everyone that gets around them notices there is something real about the power of God."

"We're not going to succeed competing with the world," he said. "Why do we keep trying to do that? That which is highly esteemed among men is an abomination to God."

"We're different by virtue of the call," he added. "Our nation is in desperate need of prophets; in desperate need of men that when they speak, hell trembles and men listen."

Falwell delivers spiritual 'pep talk' to state pastors

Warning that "the American dream is fast becoming a nightmare," Jerry Falwell gave Arkansas Baptist pastors a spiritual pep talk during the closing message of the 1994 Arkansas Baptist Pastors' Conference.

Falwell, a flamboyant and often controversial independent Baptist pastor from Lynchburg, Va., made only a passing reference to a small group of out-of-state picketers protesting his presence on the program at First Church, Little Rock. He focused instead on telling fellow pastors "how to start over when you're over the hill."

Describing "over the hill" as a state of mind rather than one's age, Falwell said, "The time is clearly at hand for every man who claims to be a God-called preacher to report for duty and take a stand."

"If you're quitting, don't blame God....His grace is sufficient," Falwell declared. "If God has called you, get in and stay in."

"Every day I try to meet God and get my batteries recharged and my vision renewed," he added. "Deal with the little things every day. Get them under the blood."

A call to boldness

Emphasizing that "God has called us to holy boldness," Falwell acknowledged, "If sin disqualified someone from the ministry, none of us would be qualified."

Offering practical tips on how to "stay on track," he noted, "Take a thorough and personal inventory of your life every morning....Get up early and meet God."

Other suggestions from Falwell included: "Don't ever compromise truth....Fellowship with winners....Practice positive faith talk....Make sure that all you do honors the Lord."

"Be willing to pay the price," he continued. "Let everything focus on soul-winning. That is where it is. It doesn't matter who is against you."

Urging pastors to "be God's giant in God's pulpit where He put you," Falwell added, "If you'll keep winning souls, God Almighty will bless your ministry."

Foundation, Newsmagazine cite ministry impact

Arkansas Baptist Foundation

David Moore, president of the Arkansas Baptist Foundation, announced that the Foundation is "alive and well" with \$45 million worth of assets in trust. Moore credited the work of his predecessor, longtime Foundation head Harry Trulove, with the steady growth rate. "Much of the work I do will not come to fruition that I will see... I now see the fruits of the seeds planted by Harry Trulove," he explained.

The direct work of the Foundation is the indirect support of Baptist ministries, Moore explained. "All of our donors have a heart to give," he noted. "In our business, it is not hard for people to sign an irrevocable check."

Often, the ministry goes beyond dealing with gift annuities and trusts, Moore pointed out. "Some of the people we deal with have no children and we become their family," he explained. "Sometimes we have an opportunity to witness to a family member who has no idea why their relative has left money to Baptist causes. We explain to them that their relative gave their life to Christ and at death wanted to keep on doing the same."

People often want to do something to help Arkansas Baptists, but just don't know how, Moore acknowledged. "We want to help. Call us for legal needs, wills, charitable giving and estate planning.... Keep us visible, have us in your church."

Your gift could spread the gospel."

Also during the Foundation report, messengers approved the Foundation's restated articles of incorporation and bylaws. The changes were designed to include the Foundation documents under Arkansas' 1993 Nonprofit Corporation Act.

Arkansas Baptist Newsmagazine

"Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the Lord our God," *Arkansas Baptist Newsmagazine* editor Trennis Henderson told convention messengers. Paraphrasing Psalm 20:7, he added, "Some trust in subscriptions and some in advertising, but we trust in the name of the Lord our God."

Although administrative details are necessary, Henderson emphasized, "Facts and figures are not as fundamental to fulfilling a fresh focus as the faith factor."

"I'm excited about the convention theme of reaching people because it is at the heart of Christian journalism," he added. Noting that the Newsmagazine would be "hollow and shallow" without staff members' personal Christian commitment, he pointed out that staff members are not only involved in producing the Newsmagazine, but are active in ministries in their local churches.

In addition to "maximizing the message of ministry," Henderson reported that the Newsmagazine remains debt-free and has

a growing operating reserve fund. He then introduced three Arkansas Baptist leaders to share testimonies about the Newsmagazine's ministry impact.

Jeff Cheatham, director of missions for Arkansas River Valley Association, noted that the ABN "is a versatile publication," keeping him in touch with local events as well as Southern Baptist Convention news and reports from the foreign mission field.

"It helps me discern rumors from fact, it is a current chronicle and shows the fairness of the editor in his willingness to print both sides of an issue," he added.

Ina Miller, a member of Jonesboro First Church and former state Woman's Mission Union vice president, pointed out that the Newsmagazine informs Arkansas Baptists about missions, state disaster teams, volunteer partnerships and missions emphases such as Lottie Moon and Annie Armstrong. "You can be an integral part of missions by reading the ABN," she noted.

Cary Heard, pastor of Park Hill Church in North Little Rock, said his church's historic involvement with the Newsmagazine dates back to 1947. "We include a copy in every outreach packet," Heard commented. "It covers a lot of ground as an information and communications tool." Unless a congregation is informed, it cannot perform, he said. "Don't just receive the Newsmagazine; read it, study it and pray."

Testimonies affirm ways to 'Reach People'

By James Preston

Special to the Arkansas Baptist

The size of a church is no object when it comes to reaching people, according to state convention president Ronnie Rogers.

Affirming the convention theme, "Reach People," Rogers said a series of testimonies during each session of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention annual meeting demonstrated that regardless of a church's size or location, "we will get to experience God at work if we will just be a vessel."

During the opening session, James "Sonny" Tucker, pastor of West Helena Church, said growth is more "a spiritual matter, than demographic or sociological." He said a pastor should "attempt to improve a small church's self-image, get the most education he can get, and concentrate on personal soul-winning."

Tucker said he never lacks for leaders in his church, which averages more than 200 in Sunday School, because he personally cultivates and encourages future leaders. "Over the years I've cultivated them by telling them what I see God doing in them," he affirmed.

Jimmie Lewis, pastor of South Main Church in Crossett, said the cooperation between the sponsoring church, association, state convention and others helped South Main grow. The congregation averages about 60 in Sunday School and 70 in worship. It was chartered as a church in 1991 with 21 members. Now there are 88.

"We prayed God would send us children and God has really blessed," Lewis noted. "This area in our church is overflowing." Special ministries such as marriages and grief ministry continue to provide Lewis opportunities to reach people at times in their lives when they are receptive to the gospel.

Serving in a medium-sized church in Alma, Bob Shelton offered several principles that he has utilized to help churches grow during his years of ministry. "Growth always equals inconvenience," he said. "People are inconvenienced when you have grown from 160 to 300 in attendance." He said the best thing to do for the inconvenienced is to "try to convenience them."

Also guiding Lewis is the principle that "growth equals opportunities." Noting that growth has allowed First Church, Alma, to "do more ministry with more people," he said other growth principles are that "growth equals financial challenge, and growth will encourage evangelism and missions."

A priority on soul-winning is the reason 120 have been baptized in three years at First Church, Hampton, Dwain Miller explained. Miller, who is now pastor of Second Church in El Dorado, described his previous ministry at First Church, Hampton.

In a town of about 1,600, First Church led its association in baptisms three of the past four years. Emphasizing the urgency of an ongoing burden for unsaved people, he said that when a pastor has a burden for soul-winning, it will help maintain a soul-winning agenda for the church.



New ABREA officers are (left to right) Monica Keathley, first vice president; Larry Grayson, president; and James Alcock, second vice president. Not pictured is Jan Kelley, secretary/treasurer.

Religious educators evaluate priority needs

By Colleen Backus

Assistant Editor, Arkansas Baptist

"We carry a mistaken concept is our ministerial dogma that it is arrogant for the servant of God to express a need for praise, status and material security," Will Beal told religious educators during their annual meeting preceding the Arkansas Baptist State Convention. Beal, a personal growth consultant for ministers and an adjunct professor at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, led a three-part session on the priority needs of the minister, delegation and time management.

One need church staff has is for identity and status, he noted. "All people, all professions have an identity," Beal said. "We serve an attractive Christ and we need to be more attractive."

Another need is for affirmation, Beal pointed out. "Affirmation is the act of giving or receiving an expression of positive validation," he said. "Affirmation is difficult for some ministers to accept. They feel the giver has an ulterior motive, that they are undeserving of the recognition or feel they have to compliment in return."

Security, the freedom from fear of unemployment, is another need, according to Beal. "Security can be enhanced by being a team member and improving relational skills," he explained.

Another important work skill is delegation. "There are three divisions of our work," Beal said. "Work that only we can do, work that can be delegated immediately and work that can be delegated when another can be trained to handle responsibility." If delegation is done properly, he noted, the work will be able to go on even if the minister moves to another church.

Another job concern is time management, Beal said. Emphasizing the need "to manage your time to accept responsibility for your own behavior," he added, "It means you can control many things that happen to you and influence the rest."

Jim Corter, a member of Walnut Street Church in Jonesboro and director of human resources for Trallmobile Corporation, also addressed the educators with a motivational speech. He reminded that group that "if we believe in people, they can achieve more than we think they can."

Ministers' Wives share 'heart to heart'

The 1994 Arkansas Baptist Ministers' Wives Conference offered a glimpse into the heart as participants highlighted the theme, "Heart to Heart." Held on Monday before the Arkansas Baptist State Convention, the conference offered ministers' wives fellowship and insight into the unique task of being a minister's wife, according to 1993 president Rachael Preston of First Church, Stamps.

The program featured Barbara O'Chester, director of Great Hills Retreat Ministry in Austin, Texas. O'Chester began a retreat ministry in Great Hills Church 25 years ago which has grown into the largest women's retreat ministry in Southern Baptist life.

Janet Huckabee offered a lighthearted view of being a minister's wife. Huckabee is the wife of Lt. Gov. Mike Huckabee, who previously served as an Arkansas Baptist pastor.

Huckabee encouraged ministers' wives to be themselves even when they are asked to do things that are "not necessarily what you do." Describing ministers' wives as "heroes," she added, "Your husband may get the glory and the pat on the back after every sermon, but you are the one who adjusts your schedule and adapts your life to the needs of a congregation any time they call your husband away."

During the morning session O'Chester talked about the masks and molds that ministers' wives wear. "Masks are what we put on to protect ourselves and molds are what we try to fit ourselves and others into," she noted. "The most important thing is to be exactly what God created you to be."

Affirming that the Bible tells us we are to be like Jesus, she added, "As we let the Lord take control, we can take down the masks that are a protective covering for our faces. We can then let God come in and have such control of our lives that we are like Jesus."

In the afternoon session O'Chester talked about the pain, the pitfalls and the potential of being ministers' wives. She said there are privileges to being a minister's wife, such as, "you are the most prayed for couple in your church."

O'Chester said pain in ministry comes primarily from people, problems, possessions and persistent worry. She encouraged participants to give such concerns to God and ask Him "what can we learn from our pain."

The only way one's potential can be reached, she said, is by the power of the Holy Spirit. "When the Spirit is in control of our lives, He will produce the fruit in our lives."



Arkansas Baptist Ministers' Wives officers for the coming year are (left to right) Carolyn Powell of McGehee, 1996 retreat chairman; Lisa Fortner of Barling, secretary; and Betty Williamson of Fort Smith, president. Not pictured is vice president Judy Greer of Conway.

Chaplaincy, BSU workers elected by board

Marion Reynolds and Darrel Ray were unanimously elected to staff positions by the Arkansas Baptist State Convention Executive Board during meetings held in conjunction with the state convention annual meeting.

Reynolds was elected as an associate for chaplaincy and theological education in the ABSC missions department, succeeding Carter Tucker who is retiring. Reynolds will serve on a contract basis through the end of the year and then accept full-time responsibilities beginning January 1.

Ray, who has served since 1988 in a special worker position as Baptist Student Union director at Westark Community College in Fort Smith, was elected as a full-time employee in that position effective January 1.

Reynolds and his wife, Nancy, were introduced to Executive Board members by ABSC executive director Don Moore. "It is a great joy to bring a very wonderful and worthy couple to you for employment," he noted.

"We don't believe the last chapter in chaplaincy has been written," Moore added. "We're not calling a man to lead in what is but to lead in what ought to be."

Missions department director Jimmy Barrentine said Reynolds' election "means that the work will continue to be done at the high level set by men like Leroy Sisk and Carter Tucker." He noted that Reynolds "served as a senior chaplain in the Air



Reynolds

Ray

Force and brings to his new work exceptionally strong skills in the areas of supervision, education, administration and counseling.

"Beyond all of that," Barrentine added, "Marion takes his walk with the Lord seriously. He is a man of prayer, led by the Spirit of God and deeply rooted in the Word of God. That strong spiritual element will serve to make his work effective and lasting."

Reynolds told board members that "I can see the Lord has made things so that everything has now pointed to this point."

"I look forward to what the Lord has in mind," he affirmed. "Everything we do must be as representatives of the Lord Jesus Christ."

Reynolds, who served 24 years as an Air Force chaplain, retired in 1992 at the rank of colonel. He is a graduate of Augustana College in Rock Island, Ill., and Southern

Baptist Theological Seminary. He also has been endorsed by the Chaplains Division of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board. He and his wife are the parents of two adult daughters, Leslie Ann Styron and Lauren Marie Arjona.

Moore told board members he was "thrilled to enthusiastically recommend" Darrel Ray as full-time BSU director at Westark Community College.

David James, ABSC student ministry department director, said Ray "has been instrumental in helping us pioneer the process in moving the BSU program (at Westark) from a part-time to a full-time status and building a support system to allow that to happen."

"Darrel has proven to be a very creative and strong leader," James pointed out. "His commitment to evangelism and enlistment allows us to stay on target with the emphasis of Baptist Student Union to evangelism on campus and to provide a witness to the collegiate community at large."

Describing evangelism as "No. 1 on my priority list," Ray told board members, "I have a ministry calling in my life to be an example and lead people closer to Christ."

Ray is a graduate of Westark Community College, Arkansas Tech University and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. He currently is interim youth minister at Pianna Hills Church in Fort Smith. He and his wife Tonia have one son, Nathan.



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Huckabay, Elrod share upbeat college reports

Suggesting that "even the Lord has trouble with reports," Williams Baptist college president Gary Huckabay pointed to the account in Numbers where God "was not pleased with 10 of the reports.... By Joshua, He had reduced the number of reports by 83 percent to only two."

Presenting an "un-report," Huckabay said, "Maybe we could do away with them altogether and have a quiet time or read Scripture. We wouldn't have to account for the 2,000 students who attend Baptist colleges in Arkansas." Other schools could have provided training for "John" who had a chip on his shoulder; "Daniel" could have heard the good news somewhere else; and "Kelly" could have found somewhere else to deal with her problems.

"Other people could have provided the church leadership roles filled by WBC faculty," Huckabay said. "We wouldn't have to hear about Christian men and women who have become successful in the business world."

"We could have found other student missionaries to go to New Orleans and work in the inner-city," he continued. "We wouldn't have to hear about WBC graduate Toni Clayton from Paragould, who was voted the best first year teacher in Arkansas."

Huckabay explained that his "un-report" was a celebration of what God is doing in Arkansas through the lives of graduates of both Williams Baptist University and Ouachita Baptist University.

Ouachita president Ben Elrod also took an unusual approach in his report. Following special music by the Ouachita Baptist University Choir, the sanctuary darkened for a video presentation. The video pointed out that OBU has affected untold numbers of lives throughout the world.

The presentation also noted OBU's interest in global awareness and an emphasis on values that prepares students for a meaningful life, not just making a living. The video spotlighted OBU graduates around the world who are spreading the kingdom through their lives.

One of those graduates, Beth Ann Rankin, the reigning Miss Arkansas, highlighted the report by appearing unannounced at the spotlighted piano and playing a moving rendition of "The Battle Hymn of the Republic."

"No one could have anticipated that, as one of 1,750 students, Beth Ann Rankin was to become Miss Arkansas and become an outstanding Christian witness," Elrod concluded. He emphasized that OBU "will only fulfill its role under the lordship of Christ."

Alumni groups from five seminaries meet

Arkansas alumni of Southern Baptist seminaries held luncheon meetings Nov. 1 in conjunction with the 1994 Arkansas Baptist State Convention and elected officers for the coming year.

Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary alumni, who previously held

fellowship meetings, officially organized their Arkansas alumni chapter and elected Sid Carswell to serve as president. Ed Smith of Pine Bluff is vice president and Ruth Carswell of Little Rock is secretary. Steve Thomas, seminary vice president for institutional development, was the guest speaker.

Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary alumni elected Nadean Bell of Bentonville, president; Ernest Cooke of Hot Springs, vice president; and Angela Lowe of Little Rock, secretary/treasurer. Dan Rainbolt, director of the seminary's doctor of ministry program, was the luncheon speaker.

New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary alumni elected L.H. McCullough of North Little Rock as president; Don Moseley of North Little Rock, vice president; and Paul Brewster of Clinton, secretary/treasurer. The fellowship luncheon included a discussion on encouraging other Arkansans to attend the seminary and a video summarizing current seminary activities.

Southern Baptist Theological Seminary alumni elected Arkansas Baptist *News* magazine editor Trennis Henderson as 1994-96 president and heard speaker Jack Cunningham, the seminary's J.M. Frost associate professor of Christian education.

Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary alumni elected as officers: Scott Duval of Arkadelphia, president; Denny Wright of El Dorado, vice president; and Jim Lagrone of Bryant, secretary/treasurer. Bruce Corley, dean of the seminary's School of Theology, was the guest speaker.

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Texas Baptists vote to redefine CP giving

AMARILLO, TX (BP)—Texas Baptists voted to expand the definition of their Cooperative Program during the Oct. 31 session of the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

The change broadens the definition of CP giving to include "Texas only" gifts or church-directed gifts to non-Southern Baptist Convention worldwide causes such as the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship or Baptist World Alliance.

The approved CP giving plan was a key part of recommendations of the convention's Cooperative Missions Giving Study Committee. Messengers rejected both a minority report from five members of the committee and a substitute amendment from the floor.

Cecil Ray of Georgetown, Texas, chairman of the study committee, urged adoption of the recommendations as a way to give "breathing room essential to keeping Texas Baptists working together."

The committee recommended that the BGCT recognize and distribute as "Cooperative Program" contributions from churches given in any of three ways: to the adopted BGCT and SBC budgets according to annually adopted percentage allocations; to the adopted BGCT budget only; or to the BGCT budget and other

worldwide Baptist causes as directed by any individual church.

Ray hailed the recommended approach as a way to "match the method" of cooperative giving to the prevailing spirit within the Baptist family. The Cooperative Program could best be preserved by adapting it, he said.

John Hatch of Lake Jackson presented as a substitute a minority report from five members of the study committee, recommending "all gifts to the Baptist General Convention of Texas and/or the Southern Baptist Convention shall be recognized as Cooperative Program gifts."

Saying 94 percent of Texas Baptists give in undesignated fashion to the Cooperative Program, Hatch said there was "no mandate from the churches" to change the Cooperative Program to the degree suggested by the majority.

After the chair ruled on a show of ballots that the minority report failed, Michael Dean of Fort Worth offered an amendment to the full committee's recommendations.

Dean, pastor of Travis Avenue Baptist Church, Fort Worth, moved that the

proposed definition of CP giving be replaced with the recommendation: "That the BGCT will recognize and distribute as Cooperative Missions Giving those gifts to any other cause associated with Southern Baptists according to the instructions of the local church."

Dean called the amendment a way to create more broad-based support for the committee report, crossing "political lines." He maintained that under his approach all gifts would be recognized as "cooperative" and treated the same way.

Russell Dilday, also a Travis Avenue messenger, spoke against his pastor's amendment, saying it "institutionalizes a divided approach" to recognizing missions support.

On a show of ballots, the amendment failed by a larger margin than the minority report.

The unannounced full committee report was then approved by a show of ballots. The decision to proceed without a ballot count was questioned from the floor. But Ralph Smith, pastor of Hyde Park Baptist Church, Austin, and a supporter of the minority report, affirmed the chair's ruling.

Henry seeks SBC committee nominees

ORLANDO, FL (BP)—Jim Henry, president of the Southern Baptist Convention, has issued a letter to fellow Baptists seeking recommendations for people to serve on key committees for the 1995 annual meeting of the SBC, June 20-22 in Atlanta's Georgia Dome.

The committees for which Henry is seeking recommendations are the Committee on Committees, Committee on Resolutions, Tellers Committee and Credentials Committee.

Henry, pastor of First Baptist Church,

Orlando, Fla., said a form will need to be completed for those being recommended. The forms may be requested by writing: "Form," Dr. Jim Henry, SBC President, First Baptist Church, 3701 L.B. McLeod Road, Orlando, FL 32805.

Henry also announced that evangelist Billy Graham accepted his invitation to speak during the 1995 SBC Annual meeting.

"I think all Southern Baptists join with me in cheering this opportunity to hear one of God's choice servants in all of Christian history," Henry noted.

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Convention Uniform

Rich in the world's goods

By Roy Buckelew, professor,
Ouachita Baptist University

Basic passage: 1 Kings 11

Focal passage: Hosea 14:1-4

Central truth: Even when we are rich in the world's goods, God may not bless us if we don't do what is right in His sight.

Ethel Waters once said, "I've been rich, and I've been poor, and believe me, rich is better!" If you had been poor like she was, rich would be better. But being rich can be a curse and it is certainly a responsibility. You may be rich and miss the blessing of God if you don't do what is right in His sight. Solomon had wealth, wives and other women beyond the wildest imagination, but he fell because he didn't do what God said. So consider two points:

■ *Being rich in the world's goods is no guarantee of God's blessing.* Solomon's wealth was a way God blessed him, but his wealth also led to his downfall. He could afford many wives and concubines and they "led him astray" (v. 3). Notice the chain reaction: God blessed Solomon with wealth; Solomon could afford wives and concubines; and they led him astray. Notice another reaction: Solomon was "not fully devoted" (v. 4); he "followed" idols; he "did evil" in the sight of God (vv. 4-6).

His entanglement with women from foreign nations who worshipped other gods led to his downfall. God prohibited His people from marrying those of other nations to protect His people from becoming goddess and worshipping idols. Solomon disobeyed God and followed other gods. Some still use verse 11:2 as a justification for the segregation of races and discrimination against different races, but that is not the point at all. Notice that the richest man in the world was still vulnerable to human frailties and failures.

■ *Doing right in God's sight is our guarantee of the blessings of God.* If he had continued to do what God said, he no doubt would have continued to be blessed by God. Because he didn't continue to do what God said, both he and Israel lost God's blessing. And old hurts and hatreds came back to haunt them (vv. 14-25), like in the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda today. God broke up the nation of Israel. Look at the parable of the cloak (vv. 26-32, 35-37). Could the same thing happen to our Southern Baptist Convention today? And could it be for the same reasons spelled out in verse 33?

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Life and Work

A forgiving love

By Rick Hyde, pastor,
Malvern Third Church

Basic passage: Hosea 14

Focal passage: Hosea 14:1-4

Central truth: God's love is a correcting and cleansing love.

A movie of the 1970s made this phrase popular: "Love means never having to say you're sorry." As is often the case, Hollywood once again missed the true meaning of love. There are times in a relationship when one fails and needs the forgiveness of the other. In our relationship with God, we are the ones who fail and He is the one who stands ready to forgive.

When we stray from God, we should return. Because we are human and imperfect, we will fail. "O Israel, return to the Lord your God, for you have stumbled because of your iniquity" (v. 1, NKJV). A believer's relationship with God is often illustrated as "walking with God." At times, believers "stumble" in this walk because of sin (iniquity). As the prophet Hosea called these "stumblers" to repentance, fellow believers must call erring brothers and sisters to repentance. The church's strong sense of conviction must be coupled with compassion.

To return to God, a straying believer must repent. "Take words with you, and return to the Lord. Say to Him, 'Take away all iniquity; receive us graciously, for we will offer the sacrifices of our lips'" (v. 2). Repentance has been defined as a change of desire and direction. This desire is expressed in a prayer ("take words") of confession. This direction is demonstrated in a changed life ("we will offer the sacrifices"). Confession without repentance is as hollow as conviction without compassion.

When we have repented to God, we should rejoice. "I will heal their backsliding. I will love them freely, for my anger has turned away from him" (v. 4). The old hymn encourages us to "take your burden to the Lord and leave it there." Rest in God's promise through the prophet Hosea: He will forgive you, His anger will be turned, and His love will flow freely. Don't allow your life to be enslaved with unconfessed sin or guilt and shame over repented sin. Return, repent, rejoice! The words of the prophet Hosea are as timely today as they were hundreds of years ago.

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Bible Book

Joy in all circumstances

By W. David Moore, president,
Arkansas Baptist Foundation
Basic passage: Philippians 1:1-26
Focal passage: Philippians 1:3-6,
12-26

Central truth: A believer's joy does not depend upon circumstances, but a relationship of service to Christ.

A casual reader would be surprised to discover that Philippians is one of Paul's prison epistles. This means that the letter was written while Paul was in bondage. The overwhelming theme of the letter is joy, which is evident in spite of the imprisonment.

After Paul expressed his opening greetings to the Philippians, he offered one of the most beautiful statements of thanksgiving and love in the Scripture. He even reminded them in verse 6 that God, who began the work of salvation, will complete it. If you need some encouragement for eternal security, read verse 6.

In verses 12-26, Paul referred to the struggles of his bondage. Notice, however, that his real struggle was that he is not free to help others know the gospel. There are some who were preaching, Paul said, for wrong motives and reasons. Even in that, Paul found a way to be thankful. At least Christ was being preached!

Personally, he wanted to preach and teach freely; but he had learned that even imprisonment could be understood as a blessing. That circumstance allowed him to preach to some people (the whole palace guard!) that he might never have touched with the gospel.

Now his struggle was living and dying, for he knew that soon the order may have been given for his execution. He implied that God would probably give him longer on the earth, but even death would be glorious for him.

Too many believers tie happiness to their circumstances. They see peace and joy as the absence of any problems or difficulties. Believers need to learn that such a philosophy of life is disastrous, because all of us have problems and difficulties.

The secret is to learn that even in bad circumstances God can be glorified. Your relationship to God does not depend on externals, but on a spirit of love and obedience to Christ. Yes, friend, there is joy, even in your circumstances!

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Convention Uniform

The essence of greatness

By Ed Saucier, pastor,
Grand Avenue Church, Fort Smith
Basic passage: Matthew 3
Focal passage: Matthew 3:1-3
Central truth: Genuine greatness is
God's business and it's usually
overlooked.

He was as rough as an old bridge timber, as sophisticated as a bull moose and as subtle as a garlic sandwich. He dressed weird, ate funny stuff and lived alone out on the backside of the desert. You wouldn't have found him listed in "Who's Who." He wouldn't even have made "Who's Not."

He didn't have any of the things people needed, then or now, to be successful. He had little, if any, formal education. He had little, if any, political education. He had little, if any, social status. He had little, if any, money. He had little, if any, power. He had little, if any, influence. He had little, if any, respect. He had little, if any, honor. He had little, if any, glory. He had little, if any, fame. He had little, if any, success. He had little, if any, greatness.

Washed up, bombed out and done in by the time he turned 30. I know that's how folks in my part of the world would tally up his wasted life. Because that's the way we still do things and we're good at it, too. We look things over, assess the pros and cons (at least the ones we think are important) and then pass judgment. And let me tell you, this guy wouldn't fare well in my world — not at all.

It's a crying shame. Or is it? Maybe not. Maybe there's more to this thing we call life than grabbing the "brass ring" every time. Maybe the "silver spoon" thing isn't all it's cracked up to be. Maybe the one who ends up with the most "toys" really doesn't win after all. Maybe it's possible to win and still be a loser — to lose and still be a winner (Matt. 10:39).

The irony in all this is that our walking prototype of human tragedy was the greatest man who ever lived! Now that's a lot to say about a man who lived most of his life in the shadows. But Jesus is the one who made the statement (Matt. 11:11)! Think about Moses the liberator, Elijah the miracle worker or David, the man after God's own heart. Remember them? Jesus didn't say any of those men were great, just one man, this one.

His entire life was spent preparing him for one significant purpose. He never did a single miracle, died in prison and was the very essence of greatness. He was the Messiah's forerunner. Oh, by the way, his name was John: John the Baptist.

Life and Work

Judgment is certain

By Rick Hyde, pastor,
Malvern Third Church
Basic passage: Micah 1-3
Focal passage: Micah 1:1-5, 3:8-12
Central truth: God calls His people
to expose and condemn sin.

"I have some bad news for you" are words that strike fear in the heart of any doctor's patient. The prophet Micah begins his book with words of bad news...words about the terrible effects of sin. The bad news is that sin is condemned. The good news is that God has ways to warn us of the consequences of sin. These warnings are expressed by the prophet Micah.

God warns us through His own perfection. God's perfection condemns sin. "Hear, all you peoples! Listen, O earth, and all that is in it! Let the Lord God be a witness against you, The Lord from His holy temple" (v. 1:2, NKJV). The very nature of God condemns sin. God is holy; sin is all that is unholy. It doesn't take a trained prophet (or theologian) to recognize sin. His transcendent nature is one of the ways that God exposes sin.

God warns us through His preachers. God's preachers should condemn sin. "But truly I am full of power by the Spirit of the Lord and of justice and might, to declare to Jacob his transgression and to Israel his sin" (v. 3:8). Even though anyone can recognize sin, God does call special people to expose sin. Society's concepts of right and wrong may change from generation to generation, but scriptural convictions don't. The preachers of the Word must be heard over the popularists of the world. Preachers must never get involved with politicians, but preachers must get involved in political matters. His preachers are one way that God exposes sin.

God warns us through His punishment. God's punishment condemns sin. "Therefore, because of you, Zion shall be plowed like a field, Jerusalem shall become heaps of ruins, and the mountain of the temple like the bare hills of the forest" (v. 3:12). Would the thief had stolen if he had known he would have been caught? Someone once said that all thieves are sorry after they have been caught. The prophet Micah wants God's people to feel sorrow before God levels His punishment. If we don't, we surely will sorrow when we suffer through His discipline.

Bible Book

The mind of Christ

By W. David Moore, president,
Arkansas Baptist Foundation
Basic passage: Philippians 1:27-2:30
Focal passage: Philippians 1:27-2:13
Central truth: Every believer needs
to develop the mind of Christ, which
binds the church together in unity.

In the last week, several discouraging events have been shared with me. A friend realized that I was a Southern Baptist minister and told me of her ex-husband's immoral exploits. He, too, was a Southern Baptist minister. Another friend left his church "permanently," he said, because his church had been involved in a major internal fight.

I read of a Muslim who said that his people have little respect for American Christianity. He said that, from their perspective, our women dress like prostitutes, our society kills innocent unborns and our churches murmur and divide. Ghandi once said, "I might have become a Christian were it not for Christians."

Such events should disturb us, because we are called to unity in our churches. Can we turn the tide? Do we have any "encouragement from being united with Christ," or "comfort in his love," or "fellowship with the Spirit," or "tenderness and compassion"? (v. 2:1 NIV). Is it possible for us to have the "same love, being one in spirit and purpose"? (v. 2:2). Can we learn to prefer and care for others' interests over our own? (v. 2:3-4).

The answer is a resounding yes! The answer is in finding the mind of Christ (vv. 2:5-11). When I become a church member, I give up the right to my ideas. My goal is to know the mind of Christ.

If all church members sought to know the same mind of Christ and had the same attitude as Christ, then unity can become a reality. As long as we each have our opinions and ideas from our backgrounds, there will never be unity.

It takes the same mentality that Jesus exhibited. He humbled Himself in the incarnation. He humbled Himself as a servant. He humbled Himself in the crucifixion. God then exalted Him in the resurrection and God will glorify Him even more in the last days when all knees will bow before Him.

Does your church have genuine fellowship? (I am not talking about popcorn, chips and soft drinks!) Is there unity in your church? You can be a part of that unity as you seek the mind of Christ.

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CONVENTION REPORTS

Plummer shares European partnership update

Doyle Plummer, interim coordinator of the missions partnership between the European Baptist Convention and Arkansas Baptists, noted that the partnership was the dream of ABSC Brotherhood director Glendon Grober who died earlier this year in an automobile accident. He reported that the three-year partnership with English-speaking churches in 20 countries is assisting European Baptists with their goal of having a church in every major European city.

"We're attempting to match each church in Arkansas with an English-speaking European church," Plummer said. "About 40 have asked and 25 have been matched, which leaves at least 15 European churches that need an Arkansas partner." He said there also is still a need for church groups to do projects.

Citing recent partnership efforts, Plummer pointed to a group of three Arkansas Baptist volunteers who trained 17 European Baptist church members in Continuing Witness Training. Those participants immediately went out and led 14 people to personal faith in Christ. He said there have been revivals in Germany, Vacation Bible School and tent revivals in Poland and workers assisting in a Romanian orphanage.

"There is still more to be done," Plummer said. He also requested specific prayer for visa concerns, noting that "nearly every pastor and missionary in Europe is having visa problems."

Iowa mission partnership efforts still going strong

Jimmy Barrentine, Arkansas coordinator for the Iowa/Arkansas Partnership, introduced Richard Lamborne, director of missions for the Iowa Southern Baptist Fellowship, sharing that "the way I really learned about Richard Lamborne was in the Northside Cafe in Winterset, Iowa. Everyone gathered around, with community leaders talking to Richard about real problems — he is friend, neighbor and missionary."

Lamborne affirmed the role of developing a spiritual bond in making the partnership relationship a good one. "Currently there are 71 churches, 16 church-type missions and enough Bible studies to raise our number to 100," he reported.

The Iowa Fellowship, set to become a convention in 1995, has the goal of 122 churches by 1996. Lamborne has a personal goal of 200 churches by the year 2000. "We feel your prayers," he told Arkansas Baptists.

Christian Civic Foundation affirms anti-gambling victory

Larry Page, director of the Christian Civic Foundation, thanked Christians for their support of the anti-gambling campaign which resulted in all three gambling referendums being removed from the ballot. He also voiced appreciation to Barry King, pastor of Grand Avenue Church in Hot Springs, who chaired the anti-gambling committee. "We were outspent by several million dollars and we were the only thing that was out there — but we had the Lord and we had the truth," Page stated.

"We received a lot of criticism about taking the right of the people to vote away — but we didn't do it; the Arkansas Supreme Court did," he said, adding that the court decision "upheld the integrity of the constitution."

Although elated by the victory, Page warned that the war is not over and gambling amendments will re-surface in the future. There are several things Arkansas Baptists can do to help the efforts of the Christian Civic Foundation. "Pray, give financial support and find people to form Christian Life Committees," Page said. "Read our mail; we need to find better ways to network — we are engaged in a civil war for values.... We must be salt and light to the world."

Seminary Studies program endorsed by recent graduates

Carter Tucker, an associate in the state convention missions department, reported that "seminary studies, continuing theological education is a means of reaching pastors and laypersons alike to attain ministry goals." He noted that four programs of study are available.

Hunter Douglas from Little Rock offered an amusing account of stumbling onto seminary classes in Little Rock and his 12-year odyssey that resulted in receiving a master of divinity degree from Southwestern Seminary without ever setting foot on the campus. "No one was more surprised than me to find seminary classes here," Douglas said. "I decided, 'I've got to have me some of this.'"

Rick Hyde, pastor of Malvern Third Church, used the seminary studies program to earn a doctorate from Midwestern Seminary. Hyde pointed out several strong points of the program, describing it as affordable, applicable, accountable and attainable.

"I was a pastor, but I needed more," Hyde said. "It made be a better pastor because it gave me the tools."