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Tomi Motley

Ouachita Baptist University

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MINISTERING TO THE NEW BREED

Tomi Motley
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MINISTERING TO THE NEW BREED

In the last few years the attention of the world has shifted from the adult generation to the young--the "now generation" and especially the bad members of this generation; the hippies, yippies, dopeheads, gang members. This generation has become the target of innumerable evangelical attempts, few successful and most merely serving to turn more youth against the establishment, especially the established church. The church, they say, is just not "where it's at", it hasn't got what we need, it's too strict, too much of an organization with businesslike tendencies, it's dead and there's nothing that can revive it, and even if there were, it wouldn't be worth it. This paper is an attempt to deal with two of the successful attempts at helping young people find themselves and find God.

New York City has always been a sort of headquarters for violence and for narcotics. Back before the hippies, in the days of the beatniks and Greenwich Village, drug addiction was an important factor in the crime rate. Drugs were important to the lives of the teenaged gang members; kids from the ghettos and slums with nothing better to do than to form gangs and go out and steal, kill, and rumble (fight with rival gangs). Drugs provided a release from the sordid world in which these kids lived. There are over 60,000 known heroin addicts in the United States, and one-half of them are in New York City. And that's only the ones that are known about. Dr. Efren Ramirez, former co-ordinator of NYC's addiction programs, estimated that there are over 100,000 addicts in NYC alone. Add the morphine and related drugs addicts to this, and there are possibly one million addicts in the United States.

Heroin is a drug of escape--therefore, it's only logical that most of the heroin users come from slums where there is the most to escape from. About 70% of the users in NYC are Negroes, Puerto Ricans, and Mexicans. Of course, they don't intend to become addicts. No, the teenager from the slums is too smart to get hooked on the stuff. His first experience proves that he's right--no pain, no withdrawal symptoms, he's tough. He can take it. And so he tried again. And again, until one day he misses a fix and to his shock, he starts having withdrawal symptoms. He is hooked. And the thing that began as just a game to him now becomes a life and death struggle. And because his body has built up a tolerance to heroin, he has to shoot more and more to get the kicks he's used to. Where does he get the money to buy the fix? It's expensive stuff. Thirty-five and one-fifth pounds of five percent heroin will sell for over \$400,000 on the city streets. Pure heroin is worth over 250 times as much as gold. The starting price for a beginner's fix is \$3-~~\$5~~--and it gets more expensive pretty fast. How to pay for it? Well, you start out with a job. But then you lose the job, so you start to pawn everything of value you or your family own. Although your family will probably throw you out when they discover you are hooked so you won't contaminate the younger kids in the family. Most addicts turn to shoplifting, burglary and other crimes involving property. They steal an estimated one billion dollars worth of goods each year to support their habits. And since the stuff is stolen, they get usually only one-tenth to one-fifth the actual value of the merchandise. Well, eventually, the addict gets caught. Jail, supposedly rehabilitating him, simply teaches him new methods of stealing and new places to get drugs. An addict can be sent up for shoplifting and come back knowing how to forge checks, pick pockets, break into cars without being seen, burglarize a drug-

store, use con games, hot-line (steal) an automobile and where to sell it. Very few addicts get rehabilitated--very few come clean. Even fewer stay that way. They just increase their dosage--and with the increased dosage comes the chance of taking an overdose (OD). A heroin user can never tell how strong his stuff is before he injects it; it may be milk, sugar, and quinine and no heroin, it may be a normal 3 to 10 percent heroin, or it may be a fatal 70%. And all the cures are failures. In the words of many an addict, "Once a junkie, always a junkie."

In February, 1958, Reverend David Wilkerson, an Assembly of God minister in Philipsburg, Pennsylvania, was leafing through a copy of Life magazine. One of the articles was on seven youths who had been arraigned in the fatal stabbing of a 15-year-old boy, a polio victim, at High Bridge Park in Manhattan. Dave glanced at the photographs and thought to himself "Punks." Then he began to think about these boys, about how they needed help, but there was no one who cared about them and they'd just be shunted off to prison to rot away. These questions kept plaguing Dave until he decided to try to do something to help these boys. He went to New York and got into the courtroom where they were on trial. After the session was over, Dave tried to talk to the judge but his move was misinterpreted and he was seized by the guards and ejected from the courtroom. Outside the courtroom, reporters crowded around him and he was asked to explain his presence at the trial. Photographers asked him to pose with his Bible held high in the air--and this photograph was spread across the pages of New York newspapers.

Dave returned to Philipsburg, then on another night he and a friend drove back to New York, where they became lost in the traffic. Dave got out of the car to ask directions. He was spotted by a group of teenagers

who, much to his surprise, called him "Preacher Davie" and explained that they had seen his picture in the papers and they felt he was on their side because of the way he had tried to intercede on behalf of the teenagers who were on trial. These kids not only identified Dave, they identified with him.

Through the aid of these teenagers, Dave gained access to their gangs and their lives. He made frequent trips to Manhattan to work with these kids and within eighteen months after this first trip to the courtroom, he was working on setting up a full-time ministry to the gang members of New York City. At a time when conditions were so bad that one journalist wrote: "No one cares whether Bedford-Stuyvesant lives with God or the devil," Dave was walking its streets, talking to gang members, putting his life in danger continually, sleeping in his car at night--and getting results. When he first preached on a Brooklyn street corner, the two leaders of the Chaplain gang knelt beside the curb of the street to pray. And several months later, in July, Nicky Cruz, the sadistic president of the Mau Maus--probably the toughest gang and the toughest gang member in New York City--turned his life over to God. In the days that followed, Rebels, Dragons, GGI's, Hellburners, Roman Lords--they all responded to David's simple message: "God loves you. He'll change your life if you let Him."

Dave had a dream of a house where the kids could come and be surrounded by love instead of hate and fear. In 1960, this dream was realized when the Teen Challenge Center opened in a brick house at 416 Clinton Avenue in Brooklyn. From the first time the Center opened its doors, drug addicts were admitted--most were gang members, but as the gangs began to slowly disintegrate and lose power because of the influence of drugs, more addicts began to show up. "Medical authorities seemed to agree with the addicts in saying that

there was no help for a junkie. But the word began to spread. "Teen Challenge has the answer. David Wilkerson has the answer. God is the answer."

Today Teen Challenge has five buildings in Brooklyn, including a \$400,000 spiritual therapy clinic, A farm in Pennsylvania for spiritual and vocational rehabilitation, a home for troubled girls in Garrison, an Institute of Missions to train Christian workers, and a counseling center in the Village are also a vital part of the Center's witness. And there are twenty-eight other independent Tenn Challenge Centers across the nation and in several foreign countries, including one in Little Rock, Arkansas.

The Centers are usually staffed by converted drug addicts. It is the testimony of these former addicts which brings other addicts into one of the Centers. The converted addicts testify at street meetings held in drug-infested neighborhoods. After the testimonies, the workers mingle with addicts to tell them about the hope found in God. They also pass out Teen Challenge literature.

When the addict first comes to TCC, the first step is withdrawal. No medication is given during withdrawal, which is a pretty painful experience. It's no wonder that 50% leave during the first three days--but those who stay find their withdrawal period surprisingly short; less than the usual two weeks. The second step is attending the daily chapel services and Bible classes. In these services the newcomer continually hears about the love of God, His forgiveness, and His power of rehabilitation, spiritually, physically, and mentally. At the heart of the rehabilitation program is the conversion experience. This experience brings happiness, relaxation, and the complete absence of fear. These are just exactly the things that the addicts were seeking in heroin. Teen Challenge tries to build a personal faith for each convert through classes, chapel services, and counseling sessions. The daily classes are designed to teach the basic Bible doctrine; testimonies and sermons are given in the chapel

services; and the counseling sessions are used to bring emotional problems to the surface where they can be dealt with.

After the period of time at the Center in New York City (now located at 444 Clinton Avenue), one goes to the farm--God's Mountain, or the Teen Challenge Training Center. This is a 210-acre farm in Rehresburg, Pa., about 40 miles east of Harrisburg. It's within driving distance of NYC, but far enough away to make one think twice about leaving. The farm was set up in 1962. It provides a place without the distractions of the city in which converted addicts learn to live as a Christian.

Each student spends at least three hours a day in the chapel or classroom, making an intense study of the Bible and the elements of practical Christian living. Classes are conducted in both English and Spanish because 70% of those here are Spanish-speaking. There are also daily classes in English and Spanish grammar and literature and a course in remedial reading and grammar.

The most important lesson is not taught in the classroom but is learned on the farm itself. The superintendent Rev. Frank Reynolds explains that the addicts have been involved with drugs so long that they haven't have steady jobs. It is important to teach them to learn to work. Before they hated work, not they must be shown that there is pleasure and a sense of accomplishment in work. This is done by vocational training. The students have a choice of training in auto mechanics, woodworking and carpentry, printing, dairy farming, cooking, office work, and cleaning and maintenance.

1 Another important thing taught is how to live with others. Although one should expect violence in the lumping together of people of different nationalities, people who have grown up learning fighting and prejudice and violence; there is little violence on the farm. The people are trained to turn things

over to God and let Him take care of conflicts. After the converts have completed the course in Fundamentals of the Faith, they are baptized in the farm pond. Those who are progressing spiritually are asked to give their testimonies at churches on weekends. During the week they speak in high schools and colleges.

Upon completion of the program, most converts will stay clean. Rev. Reynolds says that 71.4 percent of the converts in 1968 were not using drugs in any form. This percent is somewhat higher now. About half of those who complete the program will go on to Bible school, some to train for the ministry, others just to further their education. At one time it was nearly impossible to enter Bible college since these converts rarely ever met entrance requirements. Because of this, the Tenn Challenge Institute of Missions was begun.

For those who don't want to go on to Bible school, it would be putting all the work in vain to just send them back to their old neighborhoods. In order to meet this problem a re-entry program was established. Under this program the converts can remain in a Christian family environment to re-establish themselves. About 20 can live in the re-entry home for a small rent. They are assisted in finding jobs and are required to save systematically. They are also required to attend several Teen Challenge services and a church of their choice.

The total number of addicts is about 20% female. At first the female addict will try to support her habit by shoplifting and forging checks, but eventually she will turn to prostitution. A policeman said that on one block in Manhattan over fifty prostitutes were arrested in one night--probably over half were addicts.

The Walter Hoving Home for Girls (named for a Teen Challenge supporter, the chairman of the board of Tiffany's) is located in Garrison, New York. At

this home, some seventeen troubled girls are housed in a family atmosphere. The staff of nine is supervised by Rev. John Benton.

The girls' program is similar to the boys'. The greatest importance is placed on spiritual therapy through conversion to Christ, prayer, Bible study, chapel worship, and personal counseling. Most of those admitted originally were drug addicts and abusers. Now many others are admitted also, including delinquents, unwed mothers, those with emotional problems, runaways, and hippies. Some girls leave right off because they don't want to go cold turkey (without medication) and give up cigarettes. A few return. Those who stay begin a gradual rehabilitation process. They are encouraged to accept Christ—but not in a burst of emotion. Emotion for emotion's sake is discouraged.

A problem that is more common with the girls than with the men is that of guilt. The men are usually not haunted by the past, but it's a different story with the women. Involvement in prostitution often leads to an intense hatred of men, and often to lesbianism. It isn't easy to erase the guilt and shame that these girls feel. Through hours of prayer, counseling, and Bible study, their self-respect slowly returns. An addition to the course is Success Motivation. Since this course was begun, the drop-out rate has fallen significantly.

The Bible school is located near the Hudson River on a former Astor estate in Rhinebeck, New York. At present a dormitory and staff quarters are under construction, and after this is completed, the enrollment will increase to 100. In the six-trimester two-year course, the students study typical Bible school courses, such as Bible content, doctrine, evangelism, missions, preaching, English, history, and others. Most students become workers at Teen Challenge Centers across the country after they graduate. For those who

plan to do this kind of work, there are subjects such as hygiene, clerical training, marriage and family relations, journalism, court procedures, and Christian conduct. Students pay only \$32 for room, board and tuition each trimester and each student is required to work three hours a day to help pay for their schooling. The girls cook, sew, do housekeeping, and work in the newly-established publications department. The boys maintain the buildings and grounds and ^{work} in a farming program. Those who cannot afford fees can work overtime. On weekends the students get practical experience by sharing their testimonies and counseling on the streets, in jails, and in hospitals and help conduct services in a home mission church.

David Wilkerson's mother also got in on the act of witnessing. In 1963 she and Faye Mianulli joined together to distribute Christian literature in Washington Square in the Village. They opened the Catacomb Chapel in a former coffeshouse, but were evicted because they drew 'undesirables.' They then rented a location on Sullivan Street and named the bookroom dialogue center or coffeshouse The Lost Coin. The ministry is transient; many of the young people may never return. But the lives who are changed make up for this.

March 1, 1967, The Teen Challenge Little People's Home was opened in Westbury, Long Island. It is an experimental, temporary shelter providing Christian love, discipline, and guidance to the youngsters who live there. But this home is only temporary because the state would not certify it without a professional staff. The foster child placement program, another development for the children, was also temporary. But plans are now being made for a permanent and thorough residence ministry for troubled children. This is David Wilkerson Youth Homes and is directed by Paul Durcan, a professional social worker. The immediate plans are to obtain three residential group

homes in Suffolk and Nassau counties, Long Island. These homes will each house a maximum of seven youths--ten-to-seventeen years old and delinquents or pre-delinquents. Wilkerson hopes that ultimately the homes will be intake and re-entry centers for young people going to Teen Town, an ultramodern residential treatment center that will be constructed on 150 acres near Orlando, Florida. Teen Town will attempt the same things as the farm and Hoving Home, but with a difference. Teen Town will try to reach the kids before they're hooked.

The basis of David Wilkerson's message is simple. And yet it reaches kids who never listened to anything else before. Kids who never found anything in organized religion have found something in God and in David's words-- "Love is not something you feel. It's something you do."

On the other side of the continent another man uses the same words and he also shows how love is doing and not feeling. This man is Arthur Blessitt.

Arthur Blessitt, the Minister of Sunset Strip, came to California from Mississippi. He concentrated on ministering to the young people who have turned their backs on traditional moral values. His first step was to open a gospel night club on Sunset Strip. "His Place!" Through the door, on which there's a huge peace symbol with a cross on top, come over 2,000 people a night. There is a waitingline outside from 8pm to 4am. While the people are waiting the staff members pass out gospel tracts and psychedelic Bibles. Posters on the walls inside tell in psychedelic messages about God's love. There's a ten-foot wooden cross in the first room. There is a black-light room. Slides are flashed on the walls, but every fourth slide has a gospel message on it. And then there's a prayer room, with an open Bible and a candle sitting on a low table. There is no charge to come in. Free coffee, Kool-Aid, and food are served, provided by a Jewish bakery and catering service. At midnight there is a session of soul music, singing, and Blessitt's preaching.

Then everyone is invited to make a decision for Christ--and they come, night after night, wanting to be saved.

David Wilkerson and Arthur Blessitt and others like them are getting results with methods that seem oversimple. Too often the church makes salvation out to be something that really has to be worked for. But it isn't. It is by grace. It's simple and available to everyone, no matter what they've done or been. It's love. This is what the Teen Challenge Center and His Place are all about. This must be the way to reach people today--loving and showing that love.

Today there are over one hundred million young people under twenty-six years of age. These young people are different. They are a new breed. To minister to them, one cannot use the language or the basic premises that are used with previous generations. The young live in a different world. The Christianity they look for, even when they don't know what they are looking for, is a Christianity that is real. It must do something real for them. This is the thing that Wilkerson and Blessitt have--they don't just preach of God's love. They start out by ministering, in God's Name, to the physical and emotional needs and through this ministry provoke an interest and finally an acceptance of and dependence upon God's love for life.

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