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Women are 'jewels' of God's creation, humorist says

By Stacey Hamby

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PHOENIX (BP)-Liz Curtis Higgs delivered her trademark humor to nearly 1,000 women at the Ministers' Wives Conference luncheon June 17 during the Southern Baptist Convention's annual meeting in Phoenix.

The popular author and speaker kept the women laughing while sharing a message of joy and beauty drawn from Christian faith.

Humorist
Liz Curtis
Higgs
encourages
Southern
Baptist
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wives to
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every
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and say,
"Tada!"
(Matt
Miller/BP
Photo)

"Does it not thrill you that we are God's crown of creation?" Higgs asked, referencing the luncheon's "Jewels in the Desert" theme.

"We are the last thing he made, and he said we are very good," Higgs said. "Women were not an afterthought; we were uniquely created and uniquely equipped. I love to encourage women to embrace that and run with it."

She told every woman to jump in front of a mirror after she's ready for the day and say, "Tada!" "What happens is, we look in the mirror and find something wrong," she said. "Most women don't stop in front of a mirror to say, 'Oh, baby.' We stop to look for a problem, and if you're looking for a problem, you will find a problem."

Saying "tada" will change the way you think, she predicted. "You can't say it grumpy. It takes 5 pounds and five years off your face right off the bat. It

will change how you think about you and how you think about God and trust that he knows what he was doing when he made you. I want you to see yourself as God sees you, and you are gorgeous."

Higgs also encouraged the women to laugh more. "People sometimes say they don't have time to laugh," she said. "Now that's too busy.

"We do carry a lot of burdens, and you may think it's your job as a minister's wife to carry people's burdens. We put it in a backpack and tell God, 'I got it.' But wouldn't it just be awesome if you could just lay your burdens down for 40 minutes? Why don't you just throw it at the foot of the cross? He says, 'Take my yoke upon you.' He's going to carry the weight of it; he's just asking you to walk with him.

"Now, when you're done here, somebody can help you put the backpack back on if you want it or, if you're like me and over 40, you won't remember where you left it anyway."

Higgs said her third mission is to get women excited about the stories of women in the Bible. The author of "Bad Girls of the Bible" outlined some of her lessons learned from studying women such as Eve, Delilah and Jezebel.

There was only one commandment in the Garden of Eden, Higgs said. "And it was a diet-'Thou shalt not eat.' It was a food problem from the beginning. If that commandment had been, 'Thou shalt not drive around the garden more than 70 miles per hour,' Adam would have sinned first. And it wasn't an apple-how tempting would an apple be? It was Godiva chocolate."

Nevertheless, Higgs said, Eve was without excuse. "Eve couldn't say, 'I had a dysfunctional childhood.' She is like all of us, and she is there to teach us how not to be a bad girl."

Higgs said she enjoys studying the bad girls of the Bible because she once was a bad girl.

"In 1980, I was working at a radio station doing an afternoon show at the same place Howard Stern did a morning show," she said. Stern "told me I needed to clean up my act-not my on-air act, my life. When Howard Stern tells you need to clean up your life, it's time to pay attention. But I didn't."

Eventually, she met two people who "loved me into the kingdom," she said. "They told me I was beautiful, loveable. I couldn't believe them."

She went to church with them one day to see for herself if there were other people like them, and she said there were "pews and pews" full of funny, loving, friendly people. The first sermon she heard was from Ephesians 5.

"Here I was single and a feminist, and here's this message on wives submitting to their husbands," she recounted. "But it goes on to say, 'Husbands, love your wives and die for them.' When I heard that, I said to my friends if a man would die for me, I'd marry him in a minute. They told me a man already died for me, and his name is Jesus."

Seven weeks later, Higgs said she wanted a fresh start in life, and she got it through faith in Jesus.

"All of you have bad girls in your congregation," she said. "Be patient with your bad girls; make sure they know what an invitation means. Show them your joy. Nothing will bring people like joy."

New officers for the conference are Donna Gaines, president, wife of Steve Gaines, pastor of First Baptist Church in Gardendale, Ala.; Rana Smith, vice president, wife of Ron Smith, pastor of Sunnycrest Baptist Church in Marion, Ind.; Marilyn Foley, recording secretary/treasurer, wife of Mark Foley, president of the University of Mobile in Alabama; and Tammy Etheridge, corresponding secretary, wife of Grant Etheridge, senior pastor of First Baptist Church in Lavaca, Ark.

Next year's featured speaker is Bible study author and speaker Beth

Moore.

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