

African-American Christian women urged to intercede for the nation_101804

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HOUSTON-College student Andrea Punch grew up believing missionaries were white-haired women serving God in Asia. That stereotype vanished this summer when Punch became a missionary in Cuba.

Punch, a student at Baylor University, spoke during the first Sisters Who Care conference for African-American women, held recently at First Metropolitan Baptist Church in Houston.

She challenged participants to go home and get busy, because God has called each of them to be missionaries wherever they live.

Debra Berry

The challenge to engage in missions came from a variety of speakers during the conference sponsored by Woman's Missionary Union of Texas.

But the women didn't just talk about missions, conference organizers noted. They brought items and filled hundreds of "hygiene kits" for people in need.

The kits will be distributed through Houston Baptist missions centers; Gracewood, a ministry of Texas Baptist Family Services in Houston; Miracle Farm; the Seaman's Center in Freeport; and Christian Women's Job Corps.

Seminar leader Debra Berry insisted African-American women need to stand in the gap and intercede for a nation “under siege.”

Berry, national WMU consultant for Sisters Who Care, compared Christians' behavior today to Nehemiah of the Old Testament. When told of Israel's destruction, Nehemiah fasted and prayed.

Berry challenged women to return to the first commandment and love the Lord with all their being and love their neighbor as themselves.

“We are falling short of the commandment of God” when the United States is the third- largest recipient of missionaries and when women head 50 percent of African-American households, she said.

“When men aren't there, we must stand.”

If women fast and pray, “I believe God can fix our situation,” Berry insisted. “What Nehemiah did when he heard of the state of his nation is a lesson to us. ... Ask the Lord to break your heart for the broken world. And stand on his promises.”

The Sisters Who Care conference drew 300 women from 51 churches across Texas.

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