

LifeWay Family Bible Series for April 3: Works can illustrate faith to the world_40405

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LifeWay Family Bible Series for April 3

Works can illustrate faith to the world

James 1:16-27; 2:14-26

By Mitch Randall

LifeWay Explore the Bible Series for April 3: God's people must learn to obey his direction_40405

March 21, 2005

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LifeWay Explore the Bible Series for April 3

God's people must learn to obey his direction

Jeremiah 11:6-14

By Dennis Tucker

Truett Seminary, Waco

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AIDS workers: USAID starting to see value of abstinence before marriage_32105

March 21, 2005

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AIDS workers: USAID starting to see value of abstinence before marriage

By Erin Curry

Baptist Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)—In sub-Saharan Africa, more than 6,000 AIDS victims die each day, and more than 8,700 new infections occur each month, underscoring the need to implement effective prevention methods among healthy Africans.

International Mission Board workers Larry and Sharon Pumpelly believe that, despite resistance by government entities and cultures, they are seeing progress in the acceptance of abstinence and faithfulness promotion in the fight against AIDS.

Mrs. Pumpelly said government organizations such as the U.S. Agency for International Development are progressively more open to funding faith-based organizations that promote abstinence over condoms in AIDS prevention.

“There are still people in those organizations who will probably never see that abstinence is a strong viable choice, but there are others who will look at the facts even from their own research and say abstinence is at least one good choice and would be very much in favor of giving support to faith-based organizations,” she said.

The Pumpellys began serving as missionaries in Uganda in the mid-1980s when some people were suffering from AIDS but did not know what it was. By the early '90s, they knew they would have to implement a strong AIDS prevention program, because about 30 percent of the sexually active population in Uganda was infected with the deadly disease.

She worked with a team of Ugandans to develop a verbal-based program designed specifically for the local culture to promote abstinence before marriage and then got permission to use the True Love Waits abstinence program name in Uganda.

By the turn of the 21st century, the AIDS rate in Uganda had dropped to just

6 percent.

Steadily changing mindsets

Despite a general disagreement between faith-based groups and government-based agencies over whether abstinence or condoms are more responsible for the drop, the Baptist AIDS Response Agency (BARA), a branch of the Kenya Baptist Convention, is receiving funding from the U.S. government and working closely with USAID and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

BARA has set up voluntary counseling and testing centers in Baptist churches, where members of the congregations serve as counselors to people at risk for AIDS, Sharon said.

“I think you will still have outspoken people who will just say we probably shouldn’t go that direction, but I think it’s much different than it was 10 or 15 years ago,” she said.

The effort to change mindsets about preventing AIDS is broader than government organizations, Mrs. Pumpelly noted. Most Africans simply don’t believe it’s possible for a person to wait until marriage to have sex, and many Americans share that view as well.

“When you have a culture—American or African—that tells you it’s impossible, you look for a response based on the fact that you think it’s impossible,” she said, referring to why so much focus is on condoms.

Pumpelly, now the IMB’s Richmond, Va., associate for Central, Eastern and Southern Africa, said believing abstinence is possible requires a certain amount of faith that many people have not yet acquired. USAID generally has tended to focus more on condoms and has been reluctant to promote abstinence and faithfulness because leaders haven’t utilized the faith to believe it can work, he said.

“They just don’t believe that a young man or a young woman can go from being an adolescent to married and be abstinent. So they just say, ‘That’s impossible, so we’ve got to preach condoms,’” he said.

Supporters of abstinence are “dealing with a fallen world and a bunch of people that don’t believe faith really has anything to do with life. And see, Africans do,” he added. “For Africans, the spiritual side of things has everything to do with life. Whether they’re Christians or they’re still dealing with their traditional religions, the spirit world affects everything that they do. If it’s a sore toe or a bad crop or infertility in marriage, it all has to do with something spiritual for them. And America doesn’t know how to deal with that in other cultures. They’re just too scientific for their own good.”

Taking a stand for abstinence

Mrs. Pumpelly told of training a group of Massai pastors on how to take True Love Waits back to their people who typically don’t limit sex to marriage.

“I asked, ‘Do you think it’s possible for a boy with God’s help to grow up and not have sex with anyone until he has sex with his wife in marriage?’ That room was quieter than the proverbial pin drop,” she said. “Eventually this old man got up and answered in his native tongue, ‘If he did, everyone would know he’s a Christian.’

“I really believe we’re missing an incredible witness of who Christ is and his power by not telling young people worldwide that with God’s help they really can not have sex until they’re married and receive all that God has for them,” she said.

Mrs. Pumpelly found the youth of Uganda very receptive to the abstinence message of True Love Waits, which culminates in signing a commitment card pledging to be sexually abstinent until marriage.

The Pumpellys made signing the card difficult so that the youth would take it more seriously. For instance, after presenting the True Love Waits message, they would dismiss everyone and ask only those willing to make the abstinence commitment to stay and sign the card.

“We saw such a hunger in the youth,” she said. “One of the pictures that I think I’ll always keep in my mind is of a young man who was sitting in a mix of boys who were sitting in the back, and they were all trying to be rowdy and distract everybody. And then I noticed him right in the middle of them just hanging on every word. Then when I gave the opportunity to make a commitment, all his friends were picking their chairs up and walking out. But he made a beeline to the front, because that’s what he wanted. He wanted so badly to make a different choice than what they were making.”

Just like in any culture, Mrs. Pumpelly said, myths about sex abound in Uganda and push young people into early sexual activity. African cultures have a system of passing on sexual mores to the next generation, she said, but with urbanization and the staggering number of deaths from AIDS, that system has broken down, and the next generation is not being taught like previous generations.

“So, they’re getting a lot of their information from the wrong sources, and consequently, it’s not good information. It just causes more chaos when they get these myths,” she said.

Support from American, Ugandan presidents

But with the help of programs like True Love Waits promoted now by Ugandan Baptists and with the endorsement and strong support of Uganda’s president and first lady, Uganda has become a success story in the fight against AIDS.

In 2003, President Bush visited Uganda to spotlight the abstinence method before he allotted \$15 billion to help prevent the spread of AIDS in Third

World countries. Bush's success in promoting faith-based initiatives in the United States correlates with the success those organizations have now in Uganda, Mrs. Pumpelly said. "Worldwide, it has probably made people a little more open to faith-based groups."

But also, as time passes, more government groups are realizing the research they sponsor in countries like Uganda is concluding that condoms are not working to curb the spread of AIDS nearly as well as the abstinence and faithfulness message.

"Some of those people were people who were negative (about abstinence), and they looked at the research and said, 'Oh, wow. It's our research that says what they're doing is working,'" Mrs. Pumpelly said. "I think you're probably going to get more reports of Ugandans who say that it was choosing abstinence" that brought the AIDS rates down.

'Simply the work of God'

The transformation in Uganda is simply the work of God, she said, and such a transformation can be replicated in any country.

"What was fascinating is that by faith, we told Ugandan youth that they had the power to change the history of their country, that God would bless their nation when its individual members chose to follow his ways," Mrs. Pumpelly said. "Just like there are different generations that can tell you something different about their history, their generation could say, 'We turned Uganda around on AIDS.'

"And God did it. That's what was fun. God did it. I loved talking to the teenagers. I just loved it. But our fun was watching what God was doing, that he initiated it, he put the program together, he touched the hearts and he turned people to himself. That was our joy."

Although no longer in Africa, the Pumpellys still are champions for the

work there.

The \$12 million response of Southern Baptists to the Asian tsunami disaster was completely appropriate, Mrs. Pumpelly said, but people must be careful not to forget the AIDS epidemic that continues to ravage entire populations in sub-Saharan Africa.

“I am so appreciative of the response that Southern Baptists gave to the tsunami—overwhelmingly generous as we know Southern Baptists are. That was right in every way,” Mrs. Pumpelly said. “I would hope that because AIDS is a slower and more silent killer and (is spread largely) because of human choice rather than natural disaster, that those people and the whole situation with AIDS is not forgotten.”

Mrs. Pumpelly said even in Africa, people have a tendency to slip into a mindset that those who suffer from AIDS are getting what they deserve because their disease is the result of an act of their own will.

“And yet, when the Scripture says the wages of sin is death, and I know that I haven’t lived a sin-free life, that if I ever say to somebody that they’re getting what they deserve for their sin, I’m just reminded that by God’s grace, I didn’t get what the Scriptures say I deserve, no matter what the sin is,” she said.

“I hope that our hearts would ache and that we would pray for a strong movement of the Spirit across Africa to reduce the number of orphans, to give the next generation a future and a hope with Christ and wise choices.”

News of religion, faith, missions, Bible study and Christian ministry among Texas Baptist churches, in the BGCT, the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) and around the world.

Around the State_32105

March 21, 2005

Posted: 3/18/05



Bethel Church in Nocona was the site of a five-day crusade led by Team Impact. A total of 2,050 people attended services, and 262 people made professions of faith in Christ. Demand was so great, a special Sunday matinee service was held to accommodate the crowds, Pastor Clark Frailey said.

Around the State

♦ A special Spring Shoe Box Collection has been organized by Samaritan's Purse for children affected by the Dec. 26 tsunami. The boxes should be mailed by April 4 to P.O. Box 3000, 801 Bamboo Road, Boone, N.C. 28607. For more information, visit www.samaritanspurse.org or call (800) 442-9120.

♦ **Danny Cullins**, a 1999 graduate of Howard Payne University and pastor to students at Wallace Memorial Church in Knoxville, Tenn., is the speaker for HPU's "Resurrection Week" March 21-23. The **Justin Cofield Band** will lead music. Special services are held at the school each year to prepare students and faculty for Easter.

♦ Trustees of Hardin-Simmons University have approved 12 faculty members for tenure and 16 for promotions in rank. Tenure was recommended for **Mark Beasley, Mary Christopher, J.L. Cole, Lori Copeland, Diana Flanagan, Travis Frampton, Robert Friberg, Tido Janssen, Sue Lucas, Bernard Scherr, Judy Shipley** and **Roy Vogtsberger**. Approved for promotion to assistant professor were **Hye-Jean Choi, Tiffany Fink** and **Peter Isaacson**. Promoted to associate professor were **Kecia Ashford, Lynnette Chambers, Mary Christopher, Ray Galloway, John Hill, Nancy Kucinski, Michael Monhollon** and **Charles Waits**. Approved for promotion to professor were **Herbert Grover, Randall Maurer, Susan Pigott, Murl Sickbert** and **Doug Thomas**. **Julian Bridges** and **Thomas Moritz** were approved for faculty emeritus status.

Relationship pushes BGCT into World_32105

March 21, 2005

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Relationship pushes BGCT into World

By Ferrell Foster

Texas Baptist Communications

Texas Baptists have "a heart as big as God's world," said a San Antonio pastor, and they're on track now to become an official part of the largest worldwide Baptist body-the Baptist World Alliance.

Texas, Virginia line up with BWA_32105

March 21, 2005

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Texas, Virginia line up with BWA

FALLS CHURCH, Va.-The Baptist General Convention of Texas and the Baptist General Association of Virginia will be recommended for full

membership in the Baptist World Alliance, the group's membership committee reported.

British Baptist Alistair Brown, who sits on the committee, said it is “the committee's unanimous view that both be recommended” to the BWA General Council to become full member bodies of the worldwide umbrella group for Baptists. Brown's report came during the BWA's semi-annual Executive Committee meeting at BWA's suburban Washington headquarters.

The BGCT and BGAV already are major financial contributors to the Baptist World Alliance, and both already have joined the North American Baptist Fellowship, one of BWA's six regional groups. But the recommendation, if approved by the BWA's General Council during its meeting in July, would mean the two state conventions would become members on the same level as the 200-plus national or regional Baptist groups that make up BWA's membership. They would be the first U.S. state conventions to join.

BGCT casts new vision for evangelism_32105

March 21, 2005

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BGCT casts new vision for evangelism

By John Hall

Texas Baptist Communications

The Baptist General Convention of Texas is casting a new vision for its evangelism efforts that focuses on a church-oriented regional approach rather than on an annual statewide evangelism conference.

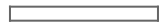
Book Reviews_32105

March 21, 2005

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Book Reviews

Leadership by Rudolph W. Giuliani (Miramax Books)



As a Christian layman or minister, do you want to be an effective leader? If so, Rudolph Giuliani, former mayor of New York City, states the core qualities necessary to lead, especially during crisis. Almost ready for publication in 2001, the World Trade Center was destroyed and Giuliani refined this book in the crucible of crisis. To lead, Giuliani says, you must know what you believe, be an optimist, have courage, make relentless preparation, assemble effective people around you and communicate effectively.



What are you reading that other Texas Baptists would find helpful? Send suggestions and reviews to books@baptiststandard.com.

Christians can draw a wealth of practical applications for ministry. The “Weddings Discretionary, Funerals Mandatory” chapter is worth the price of the book. It is akin to “the ministry of presence,” practiced by any effective deacon or minister during crisis. He gives advice any Christian workman can take to heart: “Underpromise and Overdeliver.” Based on his father's boxing lessons, his childhood confrontation with a neighborhood bully and labor unions, he says, “Stand Up to Bullies.”

Baptist Briefs_32105

March 21, 2005

Posted: 3/18/05

Baptist Briefs

BaptistWay produces Bible study materials for BWA. BaptistWay Press, the publishing arm of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, will produce the Bible study materials for the Baptist World Alliance Centenary

Congress, July 27-31 in Birmingham, England. BaptistWay Press will publish more than 12,000 copies of the BWA Bible studies, one for each registered participant, said Phil Miller, associate director of the BGCT Bible Study/Disciple-ship Center. The studies, which will be used during the congress, will focus primarily on the Gospel of John, but also have a lesson from the book of Revelation. BaptistWay Press replaces LifeWay Christian Resources, the publishing arm of the Southern Baptist Convention, as producer of the Bible studies. The SBC withdrew from the Baptist World Alliance last year, and the BGCT hopes to become a member of the global organization this year.

Historian Shurden honored. Church historian Walter Shurden, founding executive director of Mercer University's Center for Baptist Studies, will receive the fifth annual Judson-Rice Award at an April 22 dinner in Atlanta. Mercer University President Kirby Godsey will present the award on behalf of the board of directors of Baptists Today, an independent national news journal. Shurden, a Mississippi native, served 18 years as chair of the department of Christianity at Mercer and was dean of the School of Theology at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. He and his wife, Kay, are members of First Baptist Church of Macon, Ga. The Judson-Rice Award was created in 2001 to commemorate the contributions of early Baptist mission leaders Adoniram and Ann Judson and Luther Rice, and to recognize a current Baptist leader who has demonstrated important leadership while maintaining the highest integrity.

Souper Bowl of Caring raises \$3.75 million. One month after the Super Bowl, about 10,500 churches and schools reported raising more than \$3.75 million for charity through the Souper Bowl of Caring. That included 637 Baptist churches reporting \$221,906 nationwide and 57 Texas congregations raising \$38,060. Youth across the country collected \$1

donations in large soup pots on or near Feb. 6. Each group donated money directly to the charity of its choice-no money was sent to Souper Bowl of Caring headquarters. Organizers simply asked that groups report their collection amount so a national total could be determined. Groups that have not reported are encouraged to do so at www.souperbowl.org or by calling (800)-358-SOUP. Since beginning with a prayer in a single South Carolina church, the Souper Bowl of Caring has raised more than \$27 million for hungry and hurting people.

Jazz roots' call-and-response grew in Scottish soil_32105

March 21, 2005

Posted: 3/18/05



Soloist
Thomas
J.
Freeman
sings
with the
choir at
Mount
Zion
Church
in
Killen,
Ala.
(Photo
by Robin
Conn)

Jazz roots' call-and-response grew in Scottish soil

By Chuck McCutcheon

Religion News Service

KILLEN, Ala. (RNS)-When 10 members of the all-black choir at Mount Zion Church in Killen, Ala., flew to Scotland recently on their first overseas trip, they were treated like long-lost family members.