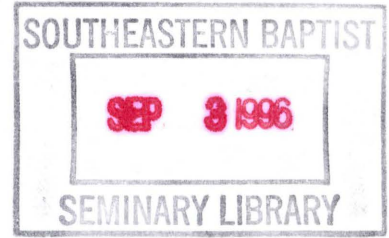


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Evangelist Recounts Ministry On The Street

By Greg Kingry

WAKE FOREST, N.C. --The Hell's Angels and the Black Panthers epitomize the unruly extremes of a past generation.

These drug dealing thugs and violent social activists struck fear in the hearts of those they encountered. Most called them outcasts and enemies of society; Leo Humphrey called them friends.

"These guys were my first congregation," Humphrey said Nov. 28. "I didn't ask for them, God gave them to me and I loved them very much."

Humphrey, now a missionary evangelist from Albany, La., recently told students at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary about the marketplace ministry that he began in the streets of San Francisco 32 years ago. His unique ministry style has taken him to street corners, barrooms, brothels and bathrooms in the French Quarter of New Orleans, across the war zones of Central America and around the world.

Recalling the Tony Bennett song in which Bennett croons, "I left my heart in San Francisco," Humphrey said at the age of 29, "I left my timidity and sin in San Francisco and I took off.

"Ever since, God has given me a ministry that is a little bit different," Humphrey told students in a basic evangelism class on the school's Wake Forest, N.C., campus.

Humphrey, who once operated a coffee house ministry in New Orleans, said God has taught him an important lesson through the years: "He's in charge. I'm not supposed to be God's super salesman; I'm to be one man who is faithful to God--and just tell the story. It works."

God is not sending us out on a fool's trip, Humphrey said. "He has a plan prepared. He has a place prepared. And he has people prepared. All we have to do is get in on it.

"I'm not pushing some kind of religious thing," Humphrey said. "Saddam Hussein has religion and it stinks. I want people to have a relationship with the living Lord.

"Wherever the Lord has put you as a Christian, you are a witness. You're either a good one or a bad one. You're either growing or you're not, but you never grow spiritually until you've shared Christ one-to-one with another individual. God made it that way."

Though his red hair has grayed, his pace has not faltered. Humphrey's infectious enthusiasm for the Gospel message continues. Working with ministry teams from the U.S., Humphrey has started 21 churches over the past 12 years in El Salvador.

He admitted that many are not cut out for his brand of ministry. "Everybody's got to do it their own way," Humphrey said. "I've just hung out on the streets. Maybe that's why I'm weird, but I just have to do it that way."

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