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WRAPUP:

World Baptists come in from 'cold' to find common bond in Argentina

By Robert O'Brien

BUENOS AIRES (ABP) -- A barely heated convention center in the dead of winter became site of a warm reunion for 8,000 of the world's Baptists celebrating unity in Jesus Christ at the 17th Baptist World Congress, Aug. 1-6 in Buenos Aires.

The worldwide gathering, held every five years, forged a link for Baptists divided by racial and political gulfs -- such as Serbs and Croats in the former Yugoslavia and blacks and whites from South Africa -- by providing love and support to remind them they belong to a larger family.

Eleazer Ziherambere, for example, a refugee in Kenya, said the congress broke isolation he felt after fleeing for his life from war-torn Rwanda.

"Taking part in this congress is somehow another opportunity to allow us to indeed realize that we are human beings," said Ziherambere, now regional secretary for the All Africa Baptist Fellowship of the Baptist World Alliance.

In another vivid expression of Baptist unity, Branco Lovrec, president of the Baptist Union of Croatia, put his arm around Dane Vidovic, a pastor in Belgrade, Serbia. "We have longed to be somewhere we can meet with one another," Lovrec said. It's not possible, he noted, for Baptists from those republics to meet in their homeland.

Although Serb and Croatian Baptists disagree on many issues related to the bitter war dividing their peoples, they strongly embraced a central theme which wove itself through the congress.

That theme emphasized that Jesus Christ is the only hope for the world. Only Jesus can truly transcend race and hue and create true unity in diversity which transcends theology, ecclesiology, politics, language and culture, speakers proclaimed.

That unity seemed to be on the horizon even for black and white South African Baptists, despite a family confrontation that broke out during the congress.

Pain over apartheid spilled over after a congress workshop on racism, when a black South African Baptist leader charged a white Baptist leader from the country had failed to acknowledge that the white community had "tacitly supported this brutal system of oppression."

BWA officials announced preliminary plans to send a friendship delegation to South Africa later this year to help build bridges in the Baptist community. The plan emerged from a meeting of BWA leaders with the white and black South African groups. Both sides agreed they must rely on their common bond in Jesus Christ to heal their pain and division.

"We have a way to go, but with the power of God, we will walk together," said one South African leader. "We will show the world how races can stand together as one. With hope for the future and the Holy Spirit, we can move to reconciliation and then forgiveness."

Meanwhile, congress participants from 124 countries on six continents focused on such issues as evangelism, social action, human rights, justice, peace, religious liberty, human need and church development. They heard speakers; attended meetings for women, men and youth; took part in workshops; sang and mingled culturally.

And they put words into action through such activities as the "True Love Waits" campaign for premarital sexual abstinence for young people, "Love in Action" projects including local hospital visits and street evangelism.

Congress participants also noted the 75th anniversary of Baptist World Aid, the BWA's relief arm, which dispensed \$10 million in relief aid last year. During the congress, BWAid director Paul Montacute urged world Baptists to contribute to BWA efforts to help refugees displaced in the heightened conflict between Croatia and Serbia in early August.

They also paused to view brief videotaped messages from former U.S. President Jimmy Carter and evangelist Billy Graham. The BWA presented Carter its first human rights award at the congress and approved a resolution of appreciation for Graham, who has spoken at almost every Baptist World Congress since 1950.

Speakers -- beginning with Carlos Menem, president of Argentina, and ending with Southern Baptist Sunday School Board President Jimmy Draper of Nashville, Tenn., - - urged Baptists to put Jesus Christ ahead of worldly gain, service ahead of self and justice ahead of oppression.

"Christ's abiding presence with us will inspire us to be missionaries, not mercenaries," declared Noah Masimba Pashapa of Zimbabwe. "It will inspire us to be disciple-makers, not personal empire builders; men and women of compassion, not men pleasers."

Another speaker, Beverly Dunston Scott, vice president of the American Baptist Churches, USA, urged personal involvement in compassionate ministry. "No Christian should believe that God will take care of injustices and unfairness and that he or she can do nothing. It's a sin to close our eyes to human needs, to walk away from an outstretched hand and to maintain silence when voices of justice, humanity and love desperately need to be heard."

Nilson Fanini of Brazil, who was elected to succeed Knud Wumpelmann of Denmark as BWA president, issued a challenge to world Baptists to engage in concerted evangelism through the year 2000, when the Baptist World Congress will convene again in Melbourne, Australia.

"Evangelism puts fire in our hearts," Fanini told shivering evangelism leaders from around the world. They ended the session with Fanini on their knees with fervent prayers in a variety of languages.

Baptists comprise the largest army on the face of the earth today, Fanini said, outnumbering 2-1 the combined military forces of the United States, Russia, England, Israel and other military powers.

"With this army can we win the world for Jesus Christ?" he asked. "Yes, we can."

Fanini, pastor of the 7,000-member First Baptist Church of Niteroi in Rio de Janeiro, urged Baptists to set a goal of winning 60 million people to Christ over the next five years. Baptists worldwide number more than 40 million and represent an extended family exceeding 100 million.

Congress meetings -- punctuated with color, pageantry and stirring music -- created a festive atmosphere, with musical beats ranging from "All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name" to the Samba.

But the overarching message was one of the difference that love makes in human relationships.

Bernice King, daughter of the late Martin Luther King Jr., put that in perspective in an evening plenary session.

It doesn't take more power, military might, education, money or technology to resolve human rights issues, said King, associate minister at Greater Rising Star Baptist Church in Atlanta, Ga.

"We need more love," she said. "Love is really what drives me to care for you."

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-- Art Toalston and Pam Parry contributed to this story.

BWA seeking to assist refugees in region of Croatian-Serb battle

By Stanley Crabb

BUENOS AIRES (ABP) -- In the wake of the Croatian attack on the Serb-held territory of Krajina in early August, Baptists have initiated plans to assist fellow Baptists likely to be displaced in the area.

Paul Montacute, director of Baptist World Aid of the Baptist World Alliance, said funds for refugee assistance are needed immediately in the area which has been a strong part of Baptist work in the former Yugoslavia.

Three representatives from Croatia and Serbia were in Buenos Aires for the 17th Baptist World Congress. They were saddened to learn of the push by the 120,000-strong Croatian army to regain the Krajina territory, which was lost to Serbia three years ago early in the civil war.

Dane Vidovic and Branco Lovrec are both leaders in their Baptist unions. Vidovic, who directs a Christian student ministry in Belgrade, Serbia, is on the executive committee of the Union of Baptists in Serbia. Lovrec is president of the Baptist Union of Croatia and director of a refugee-assistance organization, Spiritual Reality.

Both men have ancestral roots in the Krajinan villages of Grabovac and Bacuga, and relatives of Vidovic still live there. All eight churches in the region "will disappear," Vidovic predicted.

As soon as he heard of the attack, Vidovic telephoned his relatives. He learned that virtually all the people, including the Baptists in the area, either have left or are leaving to try to avoid the onslaught of the Croatian army. They will try to reach safety in Serbia, although to do so means making it through the Bosnian Islamic forces, which Vidovic described as a very dangerous situation.

Lovrec also voiced concern that many Croatians will seek vengeance for the suffering inflicted on them three years ago by the Serbs.

Montacute said: "BWAid will be launching an appeal for help for funds to meet this emergency situation" of the anticipated tens of thousands of refugees flooding into Serbia. We will need to provide immediate help to both (Baptist) unions in Serbia, and through our various contacts there."

Lovrec said: "We will go immediately in the area to provide help, as soon as the police or the army give us permission. We have already been going there. This is really where the historical center of Baptist work is, for both Serbian and Croatian Baptists."

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Communion, commitment to Christ close Baptist World Congress

BUENOS AIRES (ABP) -- Thousands of believers of different tongues and nations celebrated the Lord's Supper together and accepted the challenge to carry home "Christ, the Hope of the World" in the final session of the 17th Baptist World Congress, Aug. 6 in Buenos Aires.

"There is one loaf of bread, as we who are many are one body," said Knud Wumplemann of Denmark, outgoing president of the Baptist World Alliance, in directing the 5,000-plus participants in the communion service. His successor, Brazilian pastor Nilson Fanini, challenged departing Baptists with the example of Moses, who God instructed to tell the Israelite children to "march on" as the Egyptian army pursued them.

"God is telling us as Baptists to march on. Let's march to win the world for Christ," Fanini said.

Jimmy Draper, president of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board, said in the closing message that "our hope does not rest in some thing, some system or even a positive outlook on life."

"Our hope rests in the person of Jesus Christ," Draper said. Cut off from that person, there can be no such thing as hope."

"When you take your eyes off Jesus Christ, look what you see in this agonized 20th century," Draper said. He cited World War I, World War II, the Holocaust, Pearl Harbor, the Siege of Leningrad, Hitler, Stalin, Auschwitz, AIDS, the Persian Gulf War, the endless Slavic conflict in Bosnia, the Ebola virus in Zaire and the federal building explosion in Oklahoma City.

"Only the willfully blind could see any hope in our world apart from the person of Jesus Christ. Towering over 20 centuries, Jesus, and only Jesus, embodies the abiding hope of the ages," Draper noted.

"Let us leave this great conference to cry out to the waiting world: He died, he rose, he ascended, he sits at the right hand of the Father, and he ever lives to make intercession for us. He is our hope in life, death and eternity," Draper declared.

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-- By Jan Johnsonius

Outgoing president of BWA cites five years of joy

BUENOS AIRES (ABP) --The growth of Christianity in Third World nations and new freedoms enjoyed by Baptists in many countries around the world have brought great joy to Knud Wumpelmann of Denmark.

Serving as president of the Baptist World Alliance from 1990 to 1995, Wumpelmann said highlights of his term of service have been numerous.

"I was in El Salvador one week before they declared peace after many years of civil war," he recalled. "I was in South Africa when citizens there enjoyed their first democratic vote for president.

"I've had the extraordinary experience of worshiping with Baptist brothers and sisters from China and Nepal," he continued. In particular, Wumpelmann noted, "I have been inspired by the courage of Baptists in Rwanda." He said Eleazar Zihembere, the former general secretary of the Union of Baptist Churches in Rwanda, weathered the deaths of many of his family members during the civil war, and he now lives in exile from his country, yet "when he was called upon to serve as general secretary of the All Africa Baptist Fellowship, he answered that call. In spite of all they've suffered, Rwandan Baptists are making sure the work of God goes on."

Wumpelmann said he hopes Baptists will continue to place an emphasis on unreached people groups around the world, and he voiced a desire that "we should do more through our Baptist World Aid. It is important that we not only bring the Word of God to people who have never heard the gospel, but also that we put the love of God into action to do what we can to alleviate their suffering. In that way, we will be following the example of Jesus."

Wumpelmann concluded with a message to all member nations of the BWA: "I think we are living in an interesting time when there are so many opportunities and so many open doors to share the gospel of Christ. There are so many people who are looking for hope and direction in life. In the years ahead, I hope we will experience an even greater advancement of Christianity throughout the world, so that we will meet our goal of sharing the gospel with everyone by the year 2000."

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-- By Brenda Sanders

Cuban youth add commitments to True Love Waits abstinence

BUENOS AIRES (ABP) -- Baptist youth from around the world, including 2,000 from the communist-controlled country of Cuba, have pledged to remain sexually pure until marriage as messengers from numerous countries brought their "True Love Waits" commitment cards to the Baptist World Congress in Buenos Aires.

Richard Ross, spokesman for the campaign in America, told a Baptist World Congress youth rally Aug. 4 that True Love Waits events are now being sponsored in Baptist churches all over the world. He said the worldwide effort signifies to him the campaign is a "supernatural movement of God" that goes beyond human explanation.

Ross told the more than 400 youth attending the rally that since March he has collected commitment cards from Baptist youth in Cameroon, Angola, Uganda, Nigeria, Philippines, Jamaica, Slovakia, Hong Kong, Romania, Germany, Canada, Argentina, Chile and Cuba.

The cards from Cuba were brought by Victor Gonzales, vice president of the Baptist Youth of the Western Baptist Convention of Cuba. Gonzales said True Love Waits materials were distributed to about 130 churches in Cuba. He said he encountered no obstacles from the nation's communist government in collecting the cards.

The cards were added to the 210,000 cards collected at the Washington, D.C., True Love Waits rally in July 1994, bringing the total of commitments to 220,000 worldwide, Ross told the meeting at Buenos Aires' Central Baptist Church. The 220,000 cards were jammed into five plastic cubicles on display in the congress exhibit area in the Municipal Exhibition Center.

At the youth rally, Ana Paula Uzun of Brazil told the youth that most of the under-40 age group in Brazil, who represent a majority of the population, "do things just for pleasure" and think purity is old-fashioned. "Marriages are breaking up because of this," said Uzun, a recent dental school graduate from Sao Paulo.

"As a committed Christian, it is the time to see that God has a plan in this area, too." She said she is one of 200 Baptist volunteers committed to spreading the word in Brazil about True Love Waits.

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-- By Kay Moore

Baptist talks with other faiths discussed in congress workshop

By Jack Hillhouse

BUENOS AIRES (ABP) -- Baptist conversations with Roman Catholics, Lutherans, Reformed, Mennonite and Orthodox leaders received endorsement at a workshop during the 17th Baptist World Congress in Buenos Aires.

"We must continue these talks as we enter the third millennium, since we face a striking resurgence of non-Christian faiths, secularism, a worldwide spiritual vacuum and the ascendancy of New Age philosophy," declared Noel Vose of Australia, former president of the Baptist World Alliance. "We must join forces with other Christian bodies who can proclaim with us the Apostles Creed in (an adversarial) third millennium."

The various Christian faiths "have had problems with each other in the past," noted Knud Wumpelmann, the BWA's outgoing president, "but these conversations help us know what we can do (to avoid problems) for future generations."

Catholic and Lutheran representatives also were present to discuss their views about dealing with Baptists. A large crowd of workshop attendees raised questions about the results of these conversations and asked that the workshop continue beyond its allotted two hours.

Michael Quicke, principal of Spurgeon's College, London, opened the Aug. 3 workshop quoting Ephesians 4:3 about the unity of Christians. He substituted for an ill Gerald Borchert, chair of the Baptist World Alliance Commission on Baptist Doctrine and Interchurch Cooperation. A six-page paper prepared by Borchert describing a series of conversations held with various Christian churches since 1973 was distributed.

"It is our desire to promote a greater understanding and respect for each other and if possible to reduce any tensions and un-Christlike actions among us," Borchert's paper concluded. "It is our fervent prayer that the secular and non-Christian world outside the church might ... be able to see that Christians truly love one another, John 13:34-35."

Auguste Fernando Arlt, Lutheran bishop of Uruguay and Argentina, represented the Lutheran World Federation. He said the conversations with Baptists are important due to changes Christians face in today's world, Arlt said. "Our confessional books condemn Anabaptists, but that was in the 16th century. We have now learned how not to disparage one another. We can work together in faith and Christian traditions since we share Trinitarian theology, Christology and (belief in the Holy Spirit). And we are part of God's family."

Monsignor John A. Radano of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity was the Vatican observer at the Baptist World Congress. He said he was happy to be with the Baptists in Buenos Aires and noted that Baptists have been invited to attend the Synod of Bishops in Rome. "Meeting like this helps destroy stereotypes we have had of each other for too long," he said.

"We started meeting in 1984 and have found some things in common, as well as finding differences," Radano said. "But we came to a better understanding of each other in truth."

Telling a parable, Vose recounted: Caesar couldn't understand why the lions had not been let loose in the coliseum. An aide explained the Christians in the coliseum were fighting each other and the lions were afraid to come out.

Christians must quit fighting each other, Vose stated, listing four reasons:

- to provide understanding of divergences and agreements;
- to provide a channel at an international level for communicating problems between the religious groups;
- to provide opportunities for one group to understand others at the world level; and
- to find out what others believe from informed leaders regarding justice and integrity.

Questions from the floor indicated many Baptists feel alienated from other Christian bodies, particularly Roman Catholics in Latin America.

"Catholics and Baptists decided during a 1980 meeting in Buenos Aires to begin conversations with each other," Vose recalled. "But differences and pain ran too deep. A few years later a decision was made to form a

commission on interchurch dialogue. We respect the views of those not wanting conversations like this, but the majority of world Baptists apparently want the discussions to proceed."

Glenn Ingleheart, missions director of the Baptist Convention of New York, noted Pope John Paul II had wanted Russian Baptists to be in talks in Eastern Europe, while some Baptists are unwilling to talk to other Baptists.

Baptists and Catholics can agree on the place of Scripture, the work of the Holy Spirit and the importance of ethics, Ingleheart said. They share the first four Ecumenical Councils and can agree on actions taken at some other ecumenical councils in church history, especially Vatican Council II. But they disagree on issues such as baptism, but even there, Baptists emphasize faith before baptism while Catholics see faith as active in baptism, even in an infant. Evangelism and proselytism and the issue of church versus state are areas for continued discussion.

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Study shows Christian men not alone in sexual fears

By Mark Wingfield

(ABP) -- Most Christian men secretly fear they have abnormal sexual thoughts and desires, according to the author of a first-of-its-kind study on the sexuality of "good men."

But because men are notoriously shy about talking with other men about substantive issues related to sex, most go through life unaware that the sexual thoughts and desires they experience are common to all men, said Archibald Hart, author of the study.

Hart, dean of the graduate school of psychology at the conservative Fuller Theological Seminary, has surveyed thousands of Christian men over the past 25 years. His research has focused exclusively on what he calls "good" men: "They are mainstream men. Mostly they are married, fathers, church-going, God-fearing, decent, hard-working, honest men doing ordinary living."

Most studies of sexuality in America have focused on deviant behavior more than normal behavior, Hart said in a recent interview. So he decided to speak up for the "normal" male, whom he believes is increasingly confused about what is normal.

The result is a 223-page book titled "The Sexual Man: Masculinity Without Guilt."

Hart's book was printed by a Christian publisher, Word Publishing, and has been promoted by one of the nation's most prominent advocates of conservative family values, James Dobson.

Yet Hart doesn't mince words on topics that would make most Sunday school classes squirm. For example: -- An overwhelming majority of happily married men experience sexual attraction to women other than their wives, but the true test is how a man responds to that attraction, Hart says.

-- "The average normal male thinks about sex more often than he cares to admit," he reports. "Men often wake up thinking about it, and they go to bed thinking about it. ... And I'm talking about the preacher as much as the truck driver."

-- Almost all teenage boys masturbate regularly, he reports, adding that's not inherently wrong if self-control can be learned and use of pornography and unhealthy fantasy avoided.

-- Religion wrongly applied can create sexual hangups, he suggests, but at the same time, religious beliefs can create helpful sexual boundaries.

Hart wrote the book after meeting hundreds of Christian men in counseling settings who feared their sexual desires and thoughts were abnormal.

"They had difficulty distinguishing between what is normal and healthy from what is sick and dysfunctional," he writes. "Many feared that their strong sexual drive was in some way a distortion of nature."

As a result of this unspoken tension, many Christian men "feel driven by their hormones and find that their God-given sexuality, rather than being a delight and source of vitality, has been forced into a dark secret filled with shame, frustration and anger," he says.

It's time to "stop pretending everything is all right" with the current status of male sexuality, Hart declares. "The truth is that most men in our culture are in serious trouble. ... They don't have a clue about what it is to be normal, and they can't figure out why women don't understand their preoccupation with sex."

This problem is compounded because men and women have inherently different perspectives and timetables related to sex, Hart explains. "The male's need for sex cycles two to three times faster than that of the female's need."

Not surprisingly, then, one of the greatest frustrations Hart uncovered in his study of Christian men was desiring sex more frequently than their spouses. "By far the most common reason that married men gave for not having their sexual needs met was that their partner is not ready for sex at the same time they are," he writes.

Nonetheless, nearly three-fourths of the men Hart surveyed said their current sexual experience is either "excellent" or "good."

While Hart goes to great lengths to document what is common among Christian men, he points out that just because something is common doesn't make it healthy.

To illustrate, he cites the use of mental fantasy about sex. "Married men use fantasy a lot in sex," he said in the interview. "But in my opinion it is totally unhealthy to do so."

Twenty-five percent of the men in Hart's sample said they employ sexual fantasy often, while another 45 percent said they do so sometimes. Only 9 percent said they don't fantasize at all, while 21 percent said they fantasize only about their spouses.

For another illustration, Hart cites what he says is the most common issue Christian men want to discuss with him, masturbation. Three out of every five married men in his sample admit they still masturbate, on average once a week.

While such information may sound like the last thing a man would want his wife to know, discussing it could be the beginning of a healthier marriage, Hart said.

Most male readers of the book he has heard from said they read it only after their wives gave it to them.

"Wherever I've spoken, I've encouraged couples to read the book together," he said. "This is a wonderful opportunity for couples to talk about sex and sexual matters."

It also is important for men to talk more freely with male friends about their struggles, Hart suggested.

In the book, he cites the story of a Christian man who was worried about the sexual thoughts he kept having. "If people really knew what thoughts were going on in my head, they'd have me sent to the nearest loony farm," the man told Hart.

Hart uses this illustration to say: "By never talking to other men, Frank missed the one real truth that could have set him free from guilt and confusion: Strong sexual feelings are common to all normal men. They are determined more by hormones than by evil desire. They are not sinful in and of themselves."

The key to a healthy life is to recognize sexual feelings will come and know how to handle them appropriately, he suggests.

Hart said in the interview that he sees a greater willingness among Christian men to address these issues. "I'm very enamored of what I see going on in Promise Keepers, for example. I think men are willing to expose their feelings. I think men now are slowly becoming open."

Promise Keepers is a national movement of men's rallies and local meetings that emphasize responsibility and accountability.

Most men long for "a more fulfilling experience," Hart said. "They do want to feel like they're good, clean men."

In the end, Hart writes, sex must be seen as a virtue rather than a vice -- but a virtue that must be controlled. "Sex, left to itself, can never become virtuous," he explains.

He cites a statement by an Austrian physician named Oswald Schwarz: "The acid test of a healthy sexuality is the ability to produce an effective sexual response at the appropriate time and when the right conditions are fulfilled."

These three points -- effective sexual response, at the appropriate time and toward the right person, and when the right conditions are fulfilled -- form the core test of healthy sexuality, Hart says.

Due to the positive response from his book on male sexuality, Hart is working now to write a companion book on female sexuality, focusing on "good" Christian women. His daughter, also a counselor, is assisting in research for this book, which should be published in about 15 months, Hart said.

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Some men at risk for sexual temptation

(ABP) -- Although all men are at risk for sexual temptation, certain men are at a greater risk than others, according to Christian psychologist Archibald Hart.

Those at the greatest risk have some or all of these characteristics, he said:

-- An innocent outlook. They are naive about their own vulnerabilities.

-- A high, but rigid standard of morals. "Rigidity of morals often bespeaks a man whose defenses are brittle and easily broken down," he said. "Those who behave as if they are invulnerable are often the most vulnerable."

-- Too many unmet needs. "Men who have never been deeply loved either in childhood or adulthood are more likely to seek out someone to meet these needs," Hart explained. "Men who are hungry for affirmation or attention often get unwittingly caught up in affairs."

-- Too much failure and stress. "Mid-life failure is a common trigger for infidelity," he said. "The male reaches out for sexual fulfillment to comfort the pain that a sense of failure brings."

-- Too much guilt. "Guilt proneness, rather than being a protection, is often a hazard to fidelity just as it is to obsessiveness," Hart said. "More often than not, it exaggerates the pleasure of an affair."

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--From "The Sexual Man: Masculinity Without Guilt"

Studies show Christian couples happiest with sexuality

By Mark Wingfield

(ABP) -- Contrary to the image portrayed by Hollywood, monogamous and married Christian couples may be the most sexually satisfied people in America.

That's the report from two very different surveys of American sexuality -- "The Sexual Man," written by Christian psychologist Archibald Hart, and "Sex in America," written by a team of four social scientists from the University of Chicago with no stated religious perspective.

For his study, Hart surveyed thousands of Christian men to get a picture of the sexual thoughts and practices of what he calls "good men." He then compared this data with surveys of the general population.

"Clearly, the group of men most likely to describe their current sexual experience as excellent are those who were raised all the time in a strongly Christian home," he reported. "Around 31 percent said this, whereas only 20 percent of men raised with a non-religious background described their current experience as excellent."

"Consistent with this, but at the other end, more non-religious upbringing men are likely to say that their current sexual experience is not good. In between, the 'good' or 'fair' groups are about equally represented.

"I believe one can say, therefore, that having a strongly Christian upbringing is not detrimental to a man's sexual satisfaction as an adult. If anything, such a man is more likely to have an excellent experience."

Data from the "Sex in America" survey, a 1994 study considered to be one of the most bias-free sex surveys in American history, confirm Hart's assertions.

For example, the "Sex in America" study found men who identify themselves as conservative Protestants have sexual relations just as often or more frequently than men with no religious identification.

Conservative Protestant men reported having sex an average of seven times per month, or about twice a week.

The "Sex in America" survey also found that the group of American women most likely to experience orgasm during intercourse is conservative Protestants. "Perhaps conservative Protestant women firmly believe in the holiness of marriage and of sexuality as an expression of their love for their husbands," the authors suggested.

They further said: "Despite the popular image of the straitlaced conservative Protestants, there is at least circumstantial evidence that the image may be a myth, at least as it pertains to sexual intercourse."

And although they don't identify it as such, the "Sex in America" researchers report that the formula for enduring sexual satisfaction is the pattern taught by the Christian church.

"Those having the most partnered sex and enjoying it most are the married people," they wrote. "The young single people who flit from partner to partner and seem to be having a sex life that is satisfying beyond most people's dreams are, it seems, mostly a media creation. In real life, the unheralded, seldom discussed world of married sex is actually the one that satisfied people the most."

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Parents urged to avoid 'silence of sexuality' with sons

By Mark Wingfield

(ABP) -- Parents must avoid "the silence of sexuality" and talk openly with their sons about more than the birds and the bees, according to a Christian researcher on sexuality.

"The most critical issue for parents is to avoid the silence of sexuality," said Archibald Hart, dean of the graduate school of psychology at Fuller Theological Seminary and author of "The Sexual Man: Masculinity Without Guilt."

"The silence of sexuality is going to create far more distortion than anything in a boy's life," Hart said. "The son who is not able in the family to talk about sexuality is going to get his information -- distorted information -- from other sources.

"I'm not talking about sex education," Hart emphasized. "I'm talking about sexuality."

The question parents must help their sons address is "How do I understand what's going on inside me?" Hart said.

Hart devotes an entire chapter of his book to teenage sexuality and makes frequent references to issues of teenage sexuality in explaining issues that arise later in men's lives.

Sexual thought patterns learned in adolescence usually carry over to adult life, Hart said.

In researching his book, Hart surveyed thousands of Christian men, from age 17 to 70.

Three-fourths of these men told Hart their instruction in sexuality while growing up was inadequate. Further, only 30 percent of these men said what they had learned about sexuality as a teenager was accurate.

The need for instruction in sexuality is getting more urgent with each new generation, Hart says, because of two opposing trends.

First, the onset of puberty is occurring earlier with each new generation. Second, the age at which a male can reasonably expect to marry and be able to support a family is getting higher.

For those who believe sex should be reserved exclusively for marriage, this creates an ever-expanding gap period of sexual tension, Hart says.

"Generations ago, a boy reached puberty at 18 or 19 and could marry at 22 or 21, requiring only a short waiting period before he could experience the sexuality raging within his body. Today, boys are ready at 13 but must wait until 25 or even as late as 30 before they can marry, have sex in a stable relationship and support a family."

This means the gap of sexual tension has increased from one or two years to 15 years or more, he notes.

In addition to the dangers of pre-marital sex, this new reality increases the risk for young men to become addicted to pornography or other unhealthy behaviors, Hart explains.

"Scores and scores of boys in all our neighborhoods are learning to use pornography during the waiting period as their only sexual outlet," he writes. "Meanwhile, no one talks or writes about the real problem. How does a person driven by hormones avoid developing obsessional patterns of sexual behavior?"

The most common means of relieving sexual tension for teenage males is masturbation, according to Hart's study, which found 96 percent of all males under age 20 masturbating, on average 14 times per month.

"Masturbation is a controversial topic in many quarters," he admits in his book. "All I would like to say here is that nothing is gained by increasing a teenager's guilt over his masturbation. No doubt there are a few teenagers who masturbate to excess, but they are in the minority. Boys should be taught matter-of-fact self-control."

Hart briefly outlines the history of the church's opposition to masturbation, which has been intertwined with bizarre medical ideas -- such as claims that self-stimulation causes everything from blindness to mental incompetence -- widely published in the 18th and 19th centuries.

"Much of our modern-day attitudes toward masturbation stem from our Judeo-Christian ethic and history," Hart writes. "Jewish tradition emphasized that a man was not to waste his seed (See Leviticus 15:16-18). The sin of Onan described in Genesis 38:8-10 was really the sin of interrupting coitus. He refused to obey the law that he was to take his dead brother's wife as his own.

"Early Christian practice warned against masturbation. It is hard to believe that just over a hundred years ago the recommended cure for masturbation was castration," he notes. "Today most respectable researchers say that self-exploration and manipulation is a common form of sexual development."

The greatest danger to teenage boys is not self-stimulation but the likelihood of learning unhealthy patterns of reliance on fantasy and pornography, Hart suggests. These unhealthy patterns often become linked with masturbation, he says.

"Frank, open discussions are best," he advises. "And a total ban on masturbation will never be successful or possible. But an honest acceptance of its limitations and hazards ... is reasonable and workable."

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Author offers tips for healthy sexuality

(ABP) -- Archibald Hart, dean of the graduate school of psychology at Fuller Theological Seminary, offers six tips to parents on how to develop a healthy sense of sexuality in boys:

-- Talk about sex early. "Whenever the subject naturally arises, talk about it, just as if you were telling your kids how to brush their teeth or to say please and thank you."

-- Don't worry about telling your children too much. "They won't process information they're not ready for anyway. Telling more than necessary helps to set the stage for the next level of talking, and it helps parents to be approachable."

-- Use correct terms. "Toddlers should learn to use the correct terms for all body parts. After all, they learn knee and hand. ... By using cute words we really teach our children that these parts are secretive or different."

-- Give honest answers to questions about sex. "If your 5-year-old asks about intercourse, using our most popular slang word for it, while the boss and his wife are having dinner at your home, don't jump on him with a 'How dare you! Get to your room!' response. Be non-reactive, calm and mature."

-- Don't panic in unexpected situations. "If you catch your 3-year-old playing doctor, a 5-year-old mimicking masturbation, a 7-year-old with an erection or a 10-year-old poring over a porn magazine, don't panic. The less fuss you make, the better. ... It's your reaction that can do the harm. Never shame a child over sex."

-- Never punish a child for masturbating. "Boys will experiment, and girls may too. Criticizing or humiliating a child over masturbation can permanently harm his or her sexuality. ... How would you like your son to learn about masturbation? Your choice is two-fold: from other boys or yourself."

Hart said it is important for parents to talk with their sons not only about the mechanics of sex but broader issues of sexuality. "When parents just give straightforward biological answers to sexual questions, they do not answer the child's deepest questions at all. He wants to know why he has a body, where it came from and what it means to be a sexual being."

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-- From "The Sexual Man: Masculinity Without Guilt"

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