

THE ACCC

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PO Box 5455, Bethlehem, PA 18015

by Dr. Ralph G. Colas, Executive Secretary
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Phone (610) 865-3009 FAX (610) 865-3033 E-mail: acc@juno.com

The Promise Keepers Pastors and Leadership Conference

February 18 – 20, 2003, Bank One Ballpark, Phoenix, Arizona

With descriptive terms, Coach Bill McCartney set the tone for the 2003 Promise Keepers Pastors and Leadership Conference. "I believe this one event in 2003 will forever change what it means to be a pastor in America. In three short days something supernatural will be seen in the Bank One Ballpark in Phoenix." Later he declared, "We have had a catalytic anointing of the Spirit that is across all boundaries."

At the first press conference, McCartney said, "We will reveal God's planks of how to get together in everyone's community. The church of Jesus Christ is in real difficulty. Only 1% of all the churches are growing and 46% of all teenagers do not believe the Bible is the Word of God—in fact 9 out of 10 young people in the Church don't believe the Bible is the Word of God. The truth is denominational distinctives are a big obstacle and so in Promise Keepers our distinctive asked is simply 'Do you love Jesus?'"

Ed Barron, vice president of PK's U.S. Ministries, put it this way, "It does not matter if you are Baptist, Methodist or Catholic. Regardless of distinc-

tives we come surrounded by the Biblical truth that they love Jesus."

While the earlier publicity had predicted 50,000 would be in attendance, only 9,000 showed up in Phoenix. The theme was "Come Near To Me." This was the second-ever major clergy and leaders conference. In February of 1996, Promise Keepers held the largest clergy gathering in modern history, as 39,024 pastors, priests and ministers met at the Georgia Dome in Atlanta, Georgia. But in Phoenix, Steve Chavis, Director of Advance Planning for Promise Keepers, said "We have no other clergy conference scheduled. In fact we are not getting into that again."

It was in partnership with other ministries that this large gathering of pastors and leaders was made possible. Among those were: Alpha, Answers in Genesis, Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, Campus Crusade For Christ, Focus on the Family, Jews for Jesus, Mission America Coalition, World Vision, Seventh Day Adventists, National Association of Evangelicals, American Bible Society

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and the Abba Anointing Oil Company. NavPress gave a copy of the Bible called "The Bible In Contemporary Language—THE MESSAGE" to everyone in attendance. It was prepared by Dr. Eugene Peterson, Professor Emeritus of Spiritual Theology at Regent College, in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, and recommended by Bill McCartney, Max Lucado, and Jack Hayford.

The Clergy Confab began on Tuesday evening, February 18, 2003, at 6 P.M. with the rock beat of the Maranatha! Promise Band and Marcus Witt as the worship leader. For more than 30 minutes the large group clapped, cheered, raised their hands and swayed back and forth to the pulsating music. Dr. Jack Hayford was the moderator of the entire conference. With great skill he fulfilled his duties as he introduced the speakers and led the audience in joining him in bringing their hands together to indicate praise to Jesus. Hayford also led them several times in reaching out and embracing several sitting nearby and saying to them, "It's about Him and not us during these days." Another time they were to tell each other, "There is no God like Jehovah."

The first keynote speaker was Dr. Max Lucado, pastor of the Oak Hills Church, San Antonio, Texas, and the author of 12 books that have a combined 28 million copies in print. His subject was, "Can You Imagine?" Using Isaiah 43:7, Lucado emphasized God's great glory and God's great preeminence. He said, "God is not your co-pilot. You do not give Him orders. So why not declare right now, 'I hereby resign from me running the universe.' There is no hope when we say it is about me and we must understand it does not matter about your denomination—it is all about God!"

Dr. Lucado was followed by Rev. Erwin McManus, pastor of the Mosaic Church in Los Angeles and lecturer for Bethel Seminary. McManus said, "Nothing can stop the Church of

Jesus Christ but the Church of Jesus Christ! Since 99% of the churches in America are declining, it could be many have forsaken their calling and just have a job. How many of you are willing to be a warrior shepherd? It could be you are longing for the good old days which were never there."

Various Messianic Jewish leaders then led the 9,000 in song with traditional Hebrew dance. In a climactic action "shofars" (rams' horns) were blown simultaneously in a call to worship. Phoenix-area Messianic Rabbi Jonathan Bernis addressed the re-inclusion of Messianic Jews into the Christian family by saying, "We ask you not to replace us, but to embrace us."

The second day of the conference began with a half-hour high-decibel, rousing Worship Time. Included in this part was the request for all the participants to move around the arena and to greet one another by saying, "I love God and I love you!"

Coach Bill McCartney used Job 33:14 for his devotional. It says, "For God speaketh once, yea twice, yet man perceiveth it not." He urged everyone not to miss the voice of God. He underlined how one player on his football team in Colorado inspired the entire team to a great victory over a stronger Texas team. "We have to be a team," he said. "Just one guy can be the fresh fire taking the lead in becoming a real team that can make differences in our world."

Bishop Larry Jackson, senior pastor of Charlotte International Church (N.C.) and founder of Frontliners Men's Ministry, used John 17 as his text. He asked, "Do you want the glory of God to come? We need the glory so we can be one body with one purpose. You are placed in your city to conquer, not just to survive." Then everyone was asked to join raised hands and to call out, "LET THE GLORY COME!" This was followed by encouraging individuals to move around and to lay hands on those who needed help making sure they connect with other pastors.

Jack Hayford admitted that some might feel uncomfortable in raising their hands, as is the practice in his charismatic Four Square Church On The Way in California, but they could learn that the Bible teaches in II Timothy 2:8 that men should pray "lifting up holy hands."

The youth culture presentation was given by author Jim Burns. This was followed by Native American Dobie Weasel. Using the acrostic WALK, Weasel spoke on Worship, Action, Listen, and Kinship. He also had several young Native American pastors come forward and give gifts to the elder leaders who had been brought to the platform. Grammy-winning musician Tom Bee (Oglala Sioux), a featured soloist, then sang several songs.

The first Hispanic speaker, Noel Castellanos, explained "What is Fiesta?" It means a party so he encouraged everyone to stand and dance! He was followed by Danny DeLeon who has been the host on the Spanish version of the television 700 Club. He said there are 37 million Hispanics in the USA. Children carrying the various flags of the countries represented by the 37 million ran around the large arena as he spoke, to the delight of the participants.

A Media Roundtable with Dr. Bruce Wilkinson took place on February 19. Dr. Wilkinson is the author of *The Prayer of Jabez* and founder of "Walk Thru the Bible" and is now president of Global Vision Resources based in Johannesburg, South Africa.

He has now entered into partnership with World Vision and is issuing appeals for the Church to be unified so they can help in Africa. In South Africa, Wilkinson said, 8,000 people a day die of AIDS and 14,000 contract AIDS every day. He related how a group of Christians were able to raise \$6 million in one day. Since World Vision has 6,000 workers, they are the best ones to partner with to help to stem the tide in South Africa. He acknowledged that moral purity has not been taught or

preached as it should have been by the national pastors.

After the press conference, in private conversation, this reporter reminded Dr. Wilkinson that he had spoken only a year before at the National Religious Broadcasters Convention in Nashville, Tennessee. and told everyone he was selling his house in Atlanta and moving to Hollywood. He said he was going to get involved with the directors, producers, and others to help them produce films that included some moral values. He pled with those in attendance in Nashville at NRB to step out from where they were seated in that plenary session and to come forward and kneel before the Lord and join him in this great project of cleaning up Hollywood. A number of attendees in Nashville responded to that appeal. But in Phoenix, Wilkinson told this reporter that he was unable to find a house in Hollywood and had then received the invitation to move to South Africa and to get involved in this battle against AIDS.

Later in the conference, before the 9,000 in attendance, Wilkinson and others pled for thousands of the pastors to go to South Africa and to find out how they could get involved with his organization and World Vision. He wished that God would give them a Damascus Road experience and join him in this needy crusade. (The fact that World Vision is a part of the apostate World Council of Churches was completely ignored!)

Along with the Native American and Hispanic presentation, there was an Asian-American presentation with seminary president, Dr. Bruce Fong. He told how Asians face prejudice. He then asked, "Who is going to be the one guy who goes back to each area and charges up the community for God?"

After a film regarding African-Americans, Bishop Wellington Boone, Executive Vice President of

Global Ministries for Promise Keepers, spent much time talking about the slave traders and said that it took a war to end slavery. He then proceeded to criticize President Bush for his position regarding affirmative action. Boone asked everyone to “commit to relationships, to open doors to affirmative action; to mentor other races and to empower African-American Ministries.”

Dr. James Merritt, former president of the Southern Baptist Convention and senior pastor of the 12,000 member First Baptist Church, Snellville, Georgia, used Psalm 133:1 for his text on “Unity.” He said God wants us to **advertise** our unity, **advocate** our unity and **advance** our unity. He said he had listened as each of the various race groups told of their problems. Merritt declared, “At the cross God offers a new treaty and we are blood bought and need to move from the reservation to the resurrection. Why not turn from the rearview mirror and look out the windshield? It is time to forgive and to forget.”

The final day, Thursday, February 20, began with their Worship Time led by Israel Houghton. Many left their seats to go down near the stage to sing, hop, skip and dance.

Dr. Joe Stowell, Moody Bible Institute President, spoke on “The Challenging Response.” He used John 4 for his text. He said that Jesus went through Samaria for the disciples’ sake. “Jesus Christ leaped the barriers and talked to a woman, who was a Samaritan and immoral too. Jesus knew He had to embrace someone not like Him in order to embrace a village. If you love Jesus, you must celebrate diversity. If someone’s choir sways, maybe yours puts folk to sleep. I have had it with Christians who are ticked off about this generation. I’m starting to be part of the emerging church.”

Dr. Jack Hayford then stepped up and called Dr.

Stowell back and related that he used to be one of those who as a Pentecostal had nothing to do with Moody Bible Institute. Dr. Hayford said, “I detest that and there is a oneness between Joe Stowell and me. The walls are broken down.”

Dr. Tony Evans, Oak Cliff Bible Fellowship, Dallas, Texas, spoke on “Bringing It Together.” He also used John 4 as his text. He said that Jesus needed to go through Samaria “because it was a spiritual need. He met the woman at a place of common ground—Jacob’s well. He put His lips to her cup and asked for a drink of water. Do not let your culture get in the way of your message. Denominationalism is a sin as Christian leaders are divided. Unity is oneness of purpose. As a result Jesus even spent two days in their village.”

Bill McCartney concluded the conference as he spoke on “A Charge to Lead.” He said that pastors “are the luckiest men on the face of the earth.” McCartney asked those present to make a public decision, to reach out internationally, and to change the suburban and urban areas while even going global with the challenge of South Africa.

Several thousand went forward and knelt in unified prayer for the churches and communities to which they would return.



Observations by this reporter:

I. Since I was in attendance at the first PK Clergy Conference in Atlanta in 1996 and the PK Assembly in Washington, D.C., in 1997, I was able to compare those events with this Clergy Conference in Phoenix in 2003. Promise Keepers now claims to have reached more than 5,000,000 men during the past 12 years of conferences. Even though they have 18 events planned for 2003, the attendance and interest is declining. This is obvious when you recall nearly 40,000 clergy were present for Atlanta in 1996 and only 9,000 at

Phoenix in 2003. Also, pastors' wives were invited to this particular conference (not to Atlanta) and more than 900 wives attended a breakout session held elsewhere in Phoenix with Cynthia Heald as their speaker. The press officer acknowledged that some women, who are clergy, refused to go to that breakout session since they wanted to be present for the activities at the Bank One Ballpark.

2. The often-used phrase "If you love Jesus" is agreed upon by millions who never have been born again or remain a part of the apostate ecumenical movement. The fact is that one's skin color, ethnic background or socio-economic status should not play a part in the body of Christ. Among genuine believers "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28). But PK, in their attempt to keep the appeal of their message as broad as possible, has majored on the matter of racial discrimination and minimized other important Biblical truths.

Any attempt to bring everyone, liberal or conservative, Protestant or Catholic, charismatic or Mormon, under the same umbrella is ecumenism no matter what else it may be called. Efforts to reconcile at the expense of truth ought to be immediately rejected.

3. Although there may be individual Roman Catholics who have been born again, the fact is that the Catholic Church, along with thousands of liberal Protestant Churches, denies the doctrine of salvation by grace plus absolutely nothing. Yet according to PK that does not matter, and none are even remotely encouraged to leave churches that espouse a sacramental salvation. The problem of ecumenism is also evident in the individuals used on their platform. If you are well-known and popular you can be highlighted at a PK activity. The speakers, for the most part, are among the best communicators available today. With powerful delivery they challenge their listeners and call for an

immediate response to the message. But never are they urged to follow Ephesians 5:11, "And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them."

4. The most popular use of tolerance shows up in accommodating non-biblical beliefs and practices. How can one welcome as fellowship partners those who are greatly confused about the Holy Spirit and extra-biblical revelation, with visions and dreams along with speaking in tongues and healing crusades?

5. While we are thankful for any life changed and those who adopt goals to live a life of integrity and purity, we cannot promote any ministry which embraces leaders who identify with the National Association of Evangelicals, the World Evangelical Association and the National and World Councils of Churches. Truth is always absolute and absolutes are intolerant. It is strange to see Christian leaders so tolerant that they welcome error into their ministries and then defend that action as being Christlike. Some of the strongest, yes, even the harshest, declarations in the Word of God came from the lips of our Blessed Saviour against religious leaders who tolerated religious error. Christ taught truth!

6. There are those who suggest that Fundamentalism has failed while New Evangelicalism is doing the job, and the proof is seen in the results of these programs like Promise Keepers along with ecumenical evangelism. We are not the first ones who have been called upon to stand in an evil day. The position of Fundamentalism, with all of its shortcomings, is the correct one because of the Biblical position. A great difference between Fundamentalism and New Evangelicalism, as evident in Promise Keepers, lies in the matter of separation.

7. We need to make a choice between a limited message or a limited fellowship. It is either favor with men or favor with God. May God give us the courage and rock-like conviction to stand no matter what the cost may be.

Let us determine that, with God's help, we will do God's work in God's way!

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Special Notice: *The Executive Secretary of the American Council of Christian Churches, Dr. Ralph G. Colas, is available for speaking engagements and mini-conferences to present the ministry of the ACCC, issues of separation, and current trends on the world-wide religious scene, and to bring encouragement to the churches. For more information, contact the ACCC office at 610.865.3009.*

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62nd Annual Convention

October 21 – 23, 2003

Evangelical Methodist Church, Street, Maryland
Host Pastor: Rev. John McKnight
Phone: 410.457.5101

“But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts.” 1 Thess. 2:4

Preaching

- Dr. Frank McClelland
- Rev. John Ashbrook
- Dr. George Youstra
- Dr. Ed Panosian
- and others

Music

Clearwater Christian
College Ensemble

Fellowship

Join believers from
across the nation

*The American Council of Christian Churches is a Fundamentalist multi-denominational organization whose purposes are to **provide** information, encouragement and assistance to Bible-believing churches, fellowships and individuals; to **preserve** our Christian heritage through exposure of, opposition to, and separation from doctrinal impurity and compromise in current religious trends and movements; to **protect** churches from religious and political restrictions, subtle or obvious, that would hinder their ministries for Christ; and to **promote** obedience to the inerrant Word of God.*