



August 2002

Matthew 6:33:

Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

FIRST PLACE

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Mark Your Calendar!

First Place Conference September 20-21

Temple Baptist Church-
West Campus
5220 Old Highway 22
Hattiesburg, Mississippi

The *First Place E-Newsletter* is published monthly by First Place. Address all correspondence to First Place, 7401 Katy Freeway, Houston, TX 77024-2199.

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National Director Carole Lewis

Associate Director Kay Smith

Leadership Training Director
. Nancy Taylor

Newsletter Sheila Robbins

Dear Friends,

It is with great excitement and joy that I share with you—I am sitting in my office looking at our new First Place devotional book, ***Today Is The First Day***. It is beautiful on the outside, but more importantly, the book gives us a peek into the lives of over 60 First Place members and leaders. Each one was willing to share how God has taught, strengthened and helped them through memorizing our First Place Scripture memory verses. I have to believe that reading this book will give each of us a small taste of what heaven will be like, an eternity to hear each other's stories of God's mercy and grace.

The burden of writing over 80 devotionals for this new book in an eight-day period was overwhelming at the time, but I have come to realize that God used the time as sweet therapy for me. Writing about the last few years helped me to see God's hand in everything we have experienced. As God brought stories to my mind that related to each verse, I was reminded of how faithful He has been through it all.

If the devotionals that I wrote for the book bless your life in any way, all glory goes to God who wrote them through me. In reading them, I am astounded that I don't recall much of what I see in print. I feel sure that I was still in shock from the tragic death of our daughter, Shari, on Thanksgiving Day 2001, and not capable of putting two thoughts together, much less 80 devotionals. I'll never forget sitting down on Saturday morning, January 12, 2002 and talking to God. I poured out my heart to Him and said, "We have eight days until all my devotionals are due. If You want to write them, I promise to show up at my computer each morning at 4:00 a.m. for the next eight days and we'll see what happens." Amazingly, on the eighth day all 80 devotionals, plus the introductions to each section, were written. God came through "*exceeding abundantly above all that I could ever ask or think*." Ephesians 3:20KJV

Each of you are very precious to me and when we come together at First Place Conferences and Fitness Weeks, it's like a big family reunion. I love hearing your testimonies of God's love for you and how He has changed you from the inside out. You are also precious to me because of your love and support for my family during the last eight months. You have grieved the loss of our beloved Shari with us, and you have lifted us in prayer to the throne of God. Please know that we don't take this lightly; I tell people all the time that your prayers are the very reason we are walking on two feet and acting reasonably sane.

God bless each of you and I hope to see you September 20-21 at the First Place Conference in Hattiesburg, Mississippi or October 10-17 at Fitness Week in Round Top, Texas.



Carole Lewis
National Director
clewis@firstplace.org

Carole Lewis

First Place National Director
clewis@firstplace.org

Fruit Nutrients

Dear First Place Friends,

The "dog days of summer" seem to be of a greyhound variety (racing by) this year. It seems as though school just ended and here we are in August. I would like to point out some nutritional tips concerning our Fruit Exchange this month, focusing on vitamin C.

I believe each of us want to get optimum benefit from the foods we choose. I have just read some interesting information about orange juice. I think most believe all orange juice is equal in the amount of vitamin C. Arizona State University recently did some research that I found quite interesting.

When I buy orange juice, I think Vitamin C. I never knew that unless you use orange juice, reconstituted from frozen, or drink the juice very quickly after buying it, the juice may have considerable less milligrams of vitamin C than what is listed on the carton. The chart below shows the amount of vitamin C in milligrams. Keep in mind the Daily Value for vitamin C is 60 milligrams.

6 ounces orange juice	When bought	4 weeks later
Reconstituted from frozen	65mg	36mg
Screw-top container, Waxed (paper)carton	49mg	18mg
Milk-carton container	20mg	7mg

Orange juice has plenty of nutrients that don't degrade so quickly, including folate, potassium, some vitamin A, and trace mineral. There is no reason to throw that orange juice out, but know that you may not be getting the amount of vitamin C listed on the nutritional panel.



Kay Smith
Associate Director
kays@bigcountry.net

A ten-year study in Finland recently reported that getting enough vitamin C may help reduce stroke risk by acting as an antioxidant, strengthening artery walls, and preventing blood platelets from clumping together and sticking to artery walls.

Summer is a great time for strawberries, which are one of the richest sources of vitamin C. Just 10 fresh berries have 68 milligrams of C and 3 grams of fiber, along with many other nutrients. Cantaloupe, kiwi, mango, broccoli, tomatoes, and peppers are other good sources of vitamin C.

I recently was asked if the single-serving fruit cups or fruit bowls on the market today are a good choice. The bottom line—they are a good choice for someone who, for "whatever" reason, is not choosing fresh fruit. The downside to these products—they are usually a smaller serving size, more calories, and fewer nutrients than a piece of fresh fruit. For instance, a serving of Dole's Diced Peaches Fruitbowl is 80 calories and only 1 gram of fiber. The same amount of a fresh peach is 55 calories and 1½ grams of fiber. The upside is the fruit is processed at a particular stage of ripeness so the flavor and texture can be preserved for more than a year; they do not require refrigeration or preparation time, and they taste pretty good. Fresh fruit is your best choice, but the most important issue here is to get 3 to 4 fruit and vegetable servings each day.

May God Bless Your Efforts,
Kay Smith

Leadership Training

Finishing Well!



Nancy Taylor

Leadership Training Director
ntaylor@firstplace.org

My husband has often said, "Most people begin well, but few finish well!" It is easy to be excited about any project in the beginning, but as time goes by, our interest wanes and so does our motivation. Sadly, we often end projects either in a less than excellent manner, or sometimes we simply quit before they are completely finished. I have a closet full of unfinished craft projects, so I am a testimony of someone who has not finished well in the past. However, I am learning what it takes to daily work toward finishing well. I have the joy and honor of knowing and observing the lives of some dear senior saints, who are on their way to finishing well the path God has marked out for them. As I observe them, I see at least three common characteristics they all share. These qualities are found in the **Acrostic E-N-D** to help you remember how to end well.

Experience God daily in life.

Those who finish well are those who maintain a consistent personal and vital relationship with Christ. A sweet dear saint in my First Place class is finishing her life experiencing a vital relationship with Christ. She comes each week with her Bible study done and with a testimony of what God has taught her that very week. She is not living spiritually in the past, but is living daily in God's presence with a teachable and attentive heart. Isaiah 43:18-19 says, "*Do not call to mind the former things... Behold, I will do something new, now it will spring forth; will you not be aware of it.*" God is doing something new every day and the leader who lasts is the one who is ever looking to see and listening to hear what new thing God is wanting to do in their life.

Nurture people all through life.

For over 20 years I have observed a godly couple, Gene and Irma Warr, pour their lives into others. I receive a prayer letter from these dear saints each month and I read over and over again about how they are taking people into their home and ministering to them. Gene has had the same accountability partners for well over 20 years.

Irma still leads a young mom's Bible study, lovingly and tenderly teaching them the Word and how to live it out. As God has taught them, so they teach others. They live out the "Philippians 2 lifestyle" of putting others before themselves and looking out for the interests of others. The practice of nurturing others is allowing them to finish well.

Determine to obediently follow God's plan.

To finish any project or to finish life well, one must be persistent, determined and steadfast. Giving up is simply not an option to those who finish well. The dictionary defines determined as being *firmly resolved*. The leader who finishes well has made up their mind to complete the task set before them, no matter what obstacles or conflicts may arise. When I enrolled in college, I was determined to finish in four years. I changed my major from accounting to education, which put a little dent in my plans. However, because I determined before I ever started that I would finish, I did finish, even though it was in four and a half years instead of four. You see, God gives us a task and if we determine to complete the task, He is faithful to complete it in and through us, but not always on our timetable or in our way. Proverbs 16:9 says, "*The mind of man plans his way, but the Lord directs his steps.*" God can complete much in the person whose mind and heart are determined or firmly resolved to live out the life He has given them.

Are you a leader who is struggling? Have you considered not leading any longer? Be encouraged—do not give up, but finish well! Begin again today to daily experience God, nurturing others along the way and determined to not give up on the task God has given you.

Finish Well!

Nancy Taylor



Hints & Pinches

Tips for Making the Switch to a Vegetarian Diet

Start with convenience foods to cut cooking time. Natural food stores stock a huge array of instant soups and main-dish convenience items. Regular supermarkets also carry many fast vegetarian foods.

- Many canned soups, such as minestrone, black bean, or vegetarian vegetable, are vegetarian. Flavored rice mixes, like curried rice or Rice-a-Roni, can be stretched into an entrée with a can of beans, or try vegetarian baked beans, refried beans, sloppy-Joe sauce, and meatless spaghetti sauce. However, do watch for the sodium content on these items. Remember to limit your sodium intake to less than 2400 mg per day.
- The best bets for finding vegetarian food when dining out are international restaurants. Italian, Chinese, Mexican, and Indian restaurants all offer a wide variety of vegetarian dishes. Just ask for it!
- Order your next pizza without cheese but with a mountain of vegetable toppings and extra sauce.
- Find vegetarian cookbooks at your local library or bookstore and have fun experimenting with new foods and recipes.
- Even restaurants that don't offer vegetarian entrées can usually whip up a meatless pasta or vegetable plate if you ask. If attending a catered affair, catch the waiter before you are served and ask him or her to remove the chicken breast from your plate and slip on an extra vegetable.
- Texturized vegetable protein (TVP) is fat-free, has a texture like ground beef, and is wonderful in tacos, chili, and Sloppy Joes. Look for it in natural foods stores, as well as, the produce and freezer sections of large grocery stores. Some brand names to look for are Boca, Yves', Lightlife, and Morningstar Farms.
- Summer barbecues are healthy and fun with meatless hot dogs and burgers. For a real change of pace, grill thick slices of marinated vegetables like eggplant, zucchini, Portobello mushrooms, or tomatoes.



Scott Wilson

First Place Food Consultant
firstplacechef@hotmail.com

Scott Wilson is a certified executive chef with the American Culinary Federation. If you have any questions regarding food preparation, you may write him at 7075 Red Fox Lane, Cumming, GA 30040.

- Check out ethnic groceries for special vegetarian foods. Middle-Eastern delis offer stuffed grape leaves, falafel, and eggplant spreads. Italian markets are a wonderful place to find hearty homemade breads, sun-dried tomatoes, and fresh pasta. Indian and Asian markets also offer many vegetarian delicacies.
- The simplest dishes are often the most satisfying. Brown rice, gently seasoned with herbs and lemon and sprinkled with chopped nuts or sunflower seeds, is a perfect dish.
- Add variety to your diet with ease by preparing familiar foods in interesting new ways. Cook rice in a mixture of vegetable broth and apple juice. Toss broccoli with raisins, sprinkle sunflower seeds or chopped almonds on vegetables. Simmer carrots, turnips, cabbage, or parsnips in orange juice.
- When traveling, pack plenty of vegetarian snacks like instant soups, fresh fruit, raw vegetables, trail mix, granola bars, and homemade oatmeal cookies. Fill a cooler with sandwiches and individual containers of juice and soymilk; just make sure the milk is calcium fortified and reduced fat.
- Look for the new Bible study, **"Making Wise Choices,"** that will contain 2 weeks of vegetarian menu plans.

Scott Wilson

Vegetarian Recipes

Low-Fat Granola with Dried Fruit

Makes 12 (1/2 Cup Servings)

- 1 cup boiling water
- 1/4 cup dried cranberries
- 1 (6-ounce) package dried mixed tropical fruit
- 2 tablespoons packed brown sugar
- 3 cups regular oats
- 1/4 cup sliced almonds
- 1/4 cup chopped pecans
- 1/4 cup unsweetened coconut flakes
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1/2 teaspoon vanilla
- Vegetable cooking spray

Preheat oven to 300 degrees. In a bowl combine water, fruits, and brown sugar and let stand for 15 minutes. In a large bowl combine oats and remaining ingredients; stir in the fruit mixture. Coat two cookie sheets with vegetable spray and spread mixture on them to a depth of about 1/2-inch. Bake at 300 degrees for 1 hour, stirring every 15 minutes. Cool to room temperature and store in an airtight container.

Exchanges: 1/2 meat, 2 breads, 1/2 fruit, 1 fat

Gingered Fruit Salad

Serves 4

- 2 tablespoons orange juice
- 1/4 teaspoon ground ginger or 1 teaspoon fresh grated ginger
- 1 cup sliced strawberries
- 1/2 cup honeydew balls
- 1/2 cup cantaloupe balls
- 1/2 cup seedless white grapes
- 1/2 cup seedless red grapes

Combine juice and ginger in a bowl and add fruit. Toss to coat. Refrigerate until ready to serve. Makes four 3/4-cup serving.

Exchanges: 1 fruit

Veggie Pizza

Serves 1

- 1 7-inch flat-style whole-wheat pita bread
- 1/4 cup prepared marinara sauce
- 1/4 cup chopped frozen broccoli
- 1/4 cup diced tomatoes
- 1/4 cup sliced mushrooms
- 1/4 cup shredded part-skim Mozzarella cheese

Preheat oven to 500 degrees. Spread sauce on the pita bread and top with vegetables (any other combination may be used) Top with the cheese and bake in the oven for 5-8 minutes or until bread is crisp. Cut into wedges. Serve with Gingered Fruit Salad.

Exchanges: 1 meat, 2 breads, 1 vegetable, 1 fruit, 1 fat

Grilled Vegetables

Serves 6

- 1 small eggplant, peeled and sliced into 1/2 inch sections
- 1 medium zucchini, 1/2 inch diagonal slices
- 6 medium mushroom caps, halved
- 1 medium summer squash, sliced in 1/2 inch "moons"
- 2 medium tomatoes cut into 6 wedges each
- 1 medium red onion cut into 6 wedges
- 1/2 cup low-calorie Italian salad dressing
- 1 tablespoon soy sauce
- Salt and pepper to taste

Salt eggplant and set aside. This removes the bitterness. Prepare other vegetables. Rinse the eggplant and combine with the other vegetables in a large bowl. Drizzle with the Italian dressing, soy sauce, salt and pepper. Let marinate for 20-30 minutes. Preheat grill to medium high heat or oven to 400 degrees. Place drained marinated vegetables in a grill basket and grill over heat to desired doneness, or on a baking sheet and bake in the oven to desired doneness. Good served either hot or cold. Makes about 6 cups of cooked vegetables. Serving size 1 cup.

Exchanges: 2 vegetables, 1/2 fat

Success Stories

After gaining 65 pounds through pregnancy and having my first child, I started exercising and trying to lose weight. I didn't attend church regularly since attending college and planning a wedding had me on the go. After getting married and moving back home to Sarepta, Louisiana, I was desperate to lose weight. It seemed like everywhere I turned, I saw someone I used to go to school with and was embarrassed with the weight I had gained. I never had to watch what I ate as a teenager. I could eat whatever I wanted and wouldn't gain a pound. Children can change your life in more ways than one, can't they!

My mother was in a First Place group at church and she invited me to join. At this point I really didn't know anything about it. I thought I might be able to lose some weight, but have always been shy in crowds of people I don't know well—so I was kind of hesitant. When she offered to pay my way, I couldn't refuse. Boy, how the words FREE will change your mind on things, Huh? So, I did join and was my perspective on this class so wrong! Count what you eat! Call people I didn't know! Do a Bible Study! How in the world could I fit all of this into my busy schedule with a child? I couldn't, but God could!

I started with turning to Him daily and studying His word on a regular basis. All I had to do was get up 30 minutes earlier and spend time with Him, and He would see that I had the time I needed to get other things done, too. The more studying I did, the more God would convict me of where I stood with Him and my salvation. At the meetings, people would talk of what the Lord had showed them or spoke to them—I felt left out. I didn't really understand how they could hear Him and speak to Him as if He were a real person. God just kept convicting me through the group, Bible Study, and prayer time.

I was beginning to look better, but by then I wanted something else. I wanted to have the loving, gentle, and kind spirit of those other women in my group. As God kept convicting me, I realized that spirit and wholeness I wanted could ONLY come from HIM. I finally asked myself, "What are you scared of? Why are you turning away from someone who can give you so much for FREE?" Finally, through First Place and Jesus Christ, I accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as my personal Lord and Savior! I finally knew what it was to "Give Christ First Place" in my life. WOW! What an awesome change He has made in my life!

My husband's job has moved us to Gallion, Alabama. God has provided us with such an awesome, loving, church family where I now lead a First Place group. I don't lead the class

to just lose weight, I'm more focused on the spiritual part of the program that helps me to stay healthy from the inside, out! I love the Bible studies and seeing how God can change lives—it's just amazing! I'm already looking forward to the next session to see the wondrous works of our Lord. I have grown spiritually in such an awesome way through God and EVERYTHING First Place has to offer.

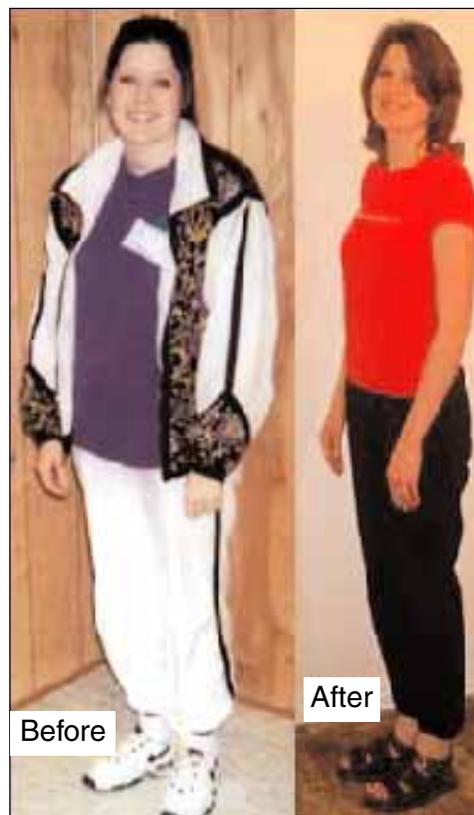
I now have two small children; my son is almost 5 years old and more spiritual than I was before this program came my way. My daughter is almost 2 years old and already says her prayers! My husband is totally supportive of the time I spend doing God's work. I thank God every day for my family and for giving me the opportunity to tell them of His wonderful love.

My prayer, *"Thank you Lord for First Place and allowing me to share your love for us. Although we enter this program to work on our outward appearance, Father you know the needs we have spiritually. I thank you Father for changing my life physically, but mostly spiritually. Lord, I pray that as I continue this journey I'm on, that you'll continue using me to bring others into a closer relationship with you. May all I do, I do to bring you glory. I thank you and I praise you for all you do for me and for my many blessings - In Jesus Christ precious name, Amen."*

Thank you First Place—for changing my body!

Thank you God—for saving my soul!

Stacey Holtzclaw Gallion, Alabama



Testimonies, photographs and letters are all welcomed for consideration. Address all correspondence to: First Place | 7401 Katy Freeway | Houston, TX 77024 or e-mail to: srobbins@houston.rr.com.



First Place Mailbag

We have just finished our first session of First Place at Hope Baptist Church. Eighteen women were in the first session and lost 162.5 pounds. The Bible study was awesome and many lives are being changed. Our next session is about to begin and we have 9 new members in the group. We are looking for a group of about 23 this session. We are anxious to see what God is going to do in this next session. Thank you so much for this wonderful program.

Nancy Perry
Hope Baptist Church
Winthrop, ME

I just wanted to thank you for a wonderful program. A wonderful lady, Barbara Alewine, started the First Place group at our church. I wanted to join but was reluctant because of the cost. Barbara came to me and said someone wanted to sponsor me, so I joined. We finished one 13-week session and a 6-week mini session.

God has really blessed me. I have lost 22 pounds so far and have about 20 more to lose. I'm also a diabetic and before First Place, my numbers were creeping upward. After following the First Place program and eating healthy and losing weight, my diabetes is back in line. My doctor wanted to know what I was doing. I showed him my member's guide and he thumbed through it and saw all my highlights and markings and then told me to keep up the good work! The first thing I did was prayed to God He would have to do this because I couldn't do it alone.

As we started our second session, our leader felt overloaded and needed assistance with the Bible study, so I offered. I ended up leading the studies, and boy did I learn a lot along the way. I'm learning to give Christ first place in my life. The scripture memory has been helpful. I've learned so much about resisting the devil and believing in God and HIS power. Thank you, again, for such a wonderful program. I get compliments all the time on my weight loss and all I can say is GOD and First Place.

Eugenia Bennett
Malakoff, Texas

FIRST PLACE UPDATE

Beverly Henson, a First Place leader from Meridian, Mississippi, has been nominated by the State Games of Mississippi for "2002 Overall Sportsman of the Year". These games are similar to the Olympics, but done on a state level. Beverly is one of five nominations announced by the State Games Commission. The 2003 Kickoff Banquet will be held in January 2003 and the Sportsman of the Year Award will be announced at that time.

During the 2002 state games, Beverly won three Gold Medals and three Silver Medals in running, swimming, kayaking and mountain biking.

See Beverly's continued First Place Success Story at www.firstplace.org/henson2.html.



Bev Henson

COMING EVENTS

FIRST PLACE WORKSHOP

August 17, 2002
New Hope Baptist Church
Loveland, Ohio
Contact: Janet Kirkhart at 937-444-1199 or janet1stplace@hotmail.com

AREA LEADER'S MEETING & TRAINING

August 22, 2002, 6pm
Christian Supply
Portland, Oregon
Reservations: Kellie McNeff at 503-262-2696
Information: Carolyn McCulloch at 503-788-8031 or mcculloch@hds.k12.or.us

FIRST PLACE WORKSHOP

August 24, 2002
Houston's First Baptist Church
Houston, Texas
Contact: Nancy Taylor at (713) 688-6788, ext. 403 or (800)727-5223, ext. 403, ntaylor@firstplace.org

FIRST PLACE CONFERENCE

September 20-21
Temple Baptist Church—West Campus
5220 Old Highway 22
Hattiesburg, Mississippi
For more information, go to www.firstplace.org

FIRST PLACE WORKSHOP

October 5, 2002
Community Church of Columbus
Columbus, Indiana
Contact: Emily Coleman at (812) 376-9478 or emily@columbuscommunity.org

FIRST PLACE FITNESS WEEK

October 10-17, 2002
Round Top Retreat
Round Top, Texas
For more information, go to www.firstplace.org

Testimonies, photographs and letters are all welcomed for consideration. Address all correspondence to:
First Place | 7401 Katy Freeway | Houston, TX 77024 or
e-mail to: srobbins@houston.rr.com.





FITNESS WEEK

October 10-17, 2002

Round Top Retreat, Round Top, Texas



Round Top Retreat. . .in beautiful Round Top, Texas, is a beautiful Victorian-style retreat center located "Deep in the Heart of Texas." It is operated by the Goad family, who began this ministry on a full-time basis in 1984, to provide a home environment with all the charm of a country setting, where people can share God's Word.



LIMITED TO FIRST 60 REGISTRATIONS!

FITNESS WEEK INCLUDES:

- ❖ Nutrition Information
- ❖ Complete Fitness Testing
- ❖ Inspirational speakers
- ❖ Rest and Relaxation
- ❖ Daily Exercise
- ❖ First Place Meals

Join the entire First Place staff, along with special guest speakers:

Rob & Vicki Heath

&

**Worship Leader
Eulalia King**

\$575⁰⁰

(includes \$100 non-refundable deposit with registration)

(Registration Form on next page)

\$625⁰⁰ Includes Airport Shuttle

(includes \$100 non-refundable deposit with registration)

**\$100 NON-REFUNDABLE DEPOSIT
DUE AT REGISTRATION**

Plus

One time payment: \$475 or Two payments: \$239⁵⁰

First Payment is due by August 15, 2002

Full Payment is due by October 1, 2002

MARK YOUR CALENDARS AND MAKE YOUR RESERVATIONS TODAY!

FITNESS WEEK

Limited to First 60 Registrations

October 10-17, 2002

Round Top Retreat ❖ Round Top, Texas

REGISTRATION FORM

Name: _____

Address: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

State/Province: _____

Country: _____

Zip/Postal Code: _____

Day Phone Number: _____

Fax Number: _____

Email Address: _____

Church: _____

How many in your group? _____

Please list the names of the people with whom you would like to room (minimum of two people to a room):

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

Airport shuttle needed? Yes No

Houston Airport - Hobby Houston Airport - Intercontinental

Name of Airline: _____

Flight #: _____

Time of Arrival: _____

TOTAL COST:

\$575⁰⁰

(includes \$100 non-refundable deposit with registration)

\$625⁰⁰

*Includes Airport Shuttle
(includes \$100 non-refundable deposit with registration)*

**\$100 NON-REFUNDABLE
DEPOSIT
DUE AT REGISTRATION**

TYPE OF CARD:

Master Card Visa

Discover American Express

Card #: _____

Expires: _____

Name as appears on card: _____

Make checks payable to:

First Baptist Church, Houston

Return completed registration form with \$100 non-refundable deposit to:

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7401 Katy Freeway
Houston, Texas 77024-2199

or Fax: 713-688-7282

**Registration Deadline: October 1, 2002
Full Payment Due: October 1, 2002**

