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Rev. Robison Is Always Ready To Preach

BY JOE DePRIEST
Star Staff Writer

James Robison is ready to preach.

Anytime.
Anywhere.
With his "heart and mind and whole spirit."

"I preach from an overflow," Robison said one morning this week between appointments in a busy schedule that would keep him on the go almost until 7:30 p.m. and another service in his crusade being held at Blanton Stadium at Shelby High School.

The 33-year-old evangelist from Texas has been described as looking more like a player for the Dallas Cowboys than a preacher. Six feet three inches tall, weighing over 200 pounds, he is an imposing figure. In private, he speaks softly, but enthusiasm mounts as he speaks of his ministry, his message.

"I'm opposed to religion per se," he said.

"I'm a foe of religion. Religion is manmade, man reaching out for God. I'm pointing people to Jesus Christ," — the "right" way, God reaching out to man.

Robison has been an evangelist for 15 years.

"God's always blessed my ministry. From the very beginning. God continues to bless it and I'm grateful," he said.

And Robison is quick to point out that his success is "nothing I achieved. God

chose to use me. I point to the right way."

The James Robison Evangelistic Association is headquartered in Fort Worth, Tex. Robison said he has done as many as 41 crusades in one year but "not any more." The Cleveland County Area Crusade is the seventh crusade of 1977, he said. Between crusades, Robison does his television show, one night evangelistic rallies (recently he covered five states in one week) and, at his headquarters, looks after books, pamphlets, recordings along with research.

"It would be a full-time job if I never did preach," he admitted.

Robison is working on a pamphlet dealing with homosexuality and one on the recent blackout in New York City.

"The great failure wasn't Con Ed," he said.

"It was a spiritual short circuit."

Robison said he is seeking to "restore the family unit — good home life. I encourage women not to be ashamed to be housewives and I wish young ladies would grow up with the thought that being a housewife was the highest and most meaningful position she could have." Commenting on women's role in the church, Robison said he believed it to be subjective to man.



JAMES ROBISON — Evangelist James Robison speaks to a gathering of several thousand persons during a service at this week's Cleveland County area crusade at the Shelby High Stadium. Robison, 33, conducts crusades all over the country. (Paul Lemmons Photo)

"I think women should feel free to express testimony and witness" but "I'm opposed to women deacons and preachers. I don't think its scriptural."

Robison's ministry takes him all over the nation and he has had invitations to conduct crusades in Korea, Switzerland, among other foreign countries and "we are looking at a crusade in Ontario, Canada."

But he doesn't know if he will accept the invitations. "I have a real burden for America," Robison said.

"If we lose America, we lose the world."

In stadiums and coliseums throughout the country, Robison "points the way." (He will be conducting a crusade this September in the Charlotte Coliseum.)

Speaking to thousands is no problem. "I'm full of my message," Robison said.

But, he admits, "basically, I'm not an outgoing person. I'm not as outgoing and friendly as I'd like to be. It's difficult for me to walk up and speak to people."

This, Robison feels, is due to his insecurity as a child.

Overcoming his early background was a "miracle," Robison said.

But he has risen above that "bitterness in my heart."

Briefly, that background includes being born in a charity ward in Houston, Tex. His father was an alcoholic who deserted his wife when she was expecting a baby. Robison's mother offered her baby to

anyone who could give him a home and he stayed with a minister and his wife until his mother came back for him when Robison was five years old. Robison's mother had remarried and his stepfather was illiterate. They lived in slums. Later, Robison's real father moved in after the mother divorced her second husband. He still drank a lot and beat his wife.

Robison moved back with his foster parents. He was converted at age 15, planned to study law at the University of Texas but went instead to East Texas Baptist College. In college, he began to preach in evangelistic meetings.

Looking back to those early years, Robison said when "God came into my life, He gave me the ability to forgive and a feeling of security. He gave me boldness and courage, something to stand for."

Robison said his messages appeal to a "total cross section" of people — church and non-church goers.

"I preach to intellectuals and business executives and to the down and outs. I've learned to preach to everybody."

There are, he said, hundreds of evangelists in the country today, "some of them goods ones, some God called" along with some "religious ripoffs."

In the April issue of

National Geographic there is an article by Peter Gordon Jenkins, a young man who decided to embark on a hike across the nation "in search of his country and himself." In Mobile, Ala. he was "going to what a friend had promised would be a 'real wild party'" when he saw a sign about a local crusade sponsored by the James Robison organization. "I had always laughed off the notion of going to any such 'Jesus joinin'" but said he "felt a call."

Jenkins wrote that he felt "silly" but when Robison spoke "I found myself listening — not so much to the words as to the fire that was in them, lighting me up inside."

People came forward when Robison gave the invitation and Jenkins went. When Robison asked "Do you accept Jesus as your personal savior?" Jenkins wrote that "My lips opened. I said yes I did. I meant it."

Response to that magazine article has been "overwhelming," Robison said. He still sees Jenkins, has had him on the TV show and Jenkins has been offered movie proposals and even a TV series based on his wanderings.

"We've seen conversions frequently at our meetings," Robison said.

"I think there's something unique about our ministry."

Exercise Is Used For Mind

ST. PAUL, Minn. (AP) — Dr. Terry Nelson, a 36-year-old psychologist and former college athlete, believes a healthy body and healthy mind go together naturally, and he is prescribing a workout at the YMCA for his patients to prove his point.

"Our whole culture tends to shape inactivity, and most people don't find it necessary to increase their heartbeat much at all during the day," he says.

"We push a button to open and close our garage doors. We park across the street from work and we can change the television channel without leaving our chairs.

"Depression is defined as inactivity, the slowing down of speech, thought and action."

Nelson says that behavior therapy is not a simple, one-shot way of dealing with a problem, adding, "You have to deal with the total person, and I see our physical fitness program as another psychological tool."

After an hour of exercise and running, Dr. Nelson and the patients meet for a group therapy session. One rule is there will be no negative talk, just positive and supportive discussion.

"One thing we talk about is whether they've been able to accomplish any firsts, have they tackled any new areas because of their new-found security. Improved emotional health is a by-product of finding success for doing things in a new way."