

Promise Keepers founder wants to bond Christians, Messianic Jews

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The man who took a downtrodden University of Colorado Buffaloes football team to a national championship and then inspired millions of Christian men to stand up for God and family as "Promise Keepers" has a new vision.

Bill McCartney wants to see a worldwide revival among Christians and Messianic Jewish believers "to come to one accord," he said.

McCartney calls his new organization The Road to Jerusalem.

The year-old group that McCartney founded after he left Promise Keepers in 2003, "envisioned that both groups will be strengthened as they celebrate Christianity's Hebraic roots and love for Israel," according to the group's mission statement.

"We have three main initiatives of proclamation, prayer and provision," McCartney said in a brief interview following an message to Parkview Baptist School students last week. He urged the 500-plus students to "be whole-hearted for God," and they were so impressed they stood and cheered.

McCartney was in Baton Rouge to visit with Lee Domingue, a longtime friend and Road to Jerusalem board member, who arranged McCartney's talk to the Parkview students. McCartney also gave a pre-game inspirational talk to the Parkview Baptist School football team. He planned to spend some time with another longtime friend, LSU head coach Les Miles and attend the LSU game with Auburn.

"I know personally no man with greater integrity than Coach Mac," Domingue said. "He gives glory to God for everything he has accomplished. He has a heart for Baton Rouge and believes God's hand is on Baton Rouge."

Like many coaches, McCartney's speech is positive and his body language exudes enthusiasm.

McCartney said The Road to Jerusalem's proclamation "is based on the high priestly prayer of Jesus in John 17, where He asked the Father in verse 19, 'that they may be sanctified in truth. I do not ask in behalf of these alone but for those also who believe in me through their word,' " McCartney said. "The 'these' meant the disciples, who were Jewish believers, and the 'those' are us, who came to faith later," he explained.

"Jesus then said in verse 21, 'that they all might be as one that the world will believe in you that sent me,'" McCartney said. "All over the world there are Jews who are coming to Christ, believing that Jesus is the Messiah, but they are paying a high price -- being persecuted and losing their families, while they are also typically below the radar screen of Christians who don't understand what God is doing today."

McCartney said that Christians should daily "pray for the peace of Jerusalem," as called for in Psalm 22:6, because of God's promise to Moses in Genesis 12:3, that says, "I will bless those who bless you and curse those who curse you."

"We want to raise up a hundred million gentile Christians who will pray daily the way Jesus prayed and raise millions of dollars for thousands of Jewish believers, who are now living in poverty in Israel, so both groups can step into the fullness of His calling," McCartney said. "In Romans chapter 15, Paul called on the early church to financially support the Jewish Christians because verse 17 says, 'they are indebted to them. For if the Gentiles have shared in spiritual things, they are indebted to minister to them also in material things.'"

"There is a clear call from the word of God for the proclamation, the prayer and the provision for the Jews by the Gentiles," McCarthy said. He said he appreciates the financial support many American Christians give to Jews in Israel, but cautioned that their first financial priority should be to support Messianic Jews based on the Romans 15 command by the Apostle Paul.

One of the main reasons that Christians now ignore the Jewish believers is a doctrine that most fundamentalist theologians critically call "replacement theology." In many mainline denominations, the church is seen as having replaced, or superseded, Israel in biblical prophecy. Also called "supersessionism," it fueled anti-Semitism during the Middle Ages and now fuels modern-day moves by some Protestant churches to financially divest from Israel, say Bible scholars such as Dr. Thomas Ice of Liberty University.

"It's an interpretation that was misconstrued because Israel (as a nation) disappeared 1,700 years ago," McCarthy said. "I think it was faulty thinking. When believers are reminded about the importance of Israel to God's plan they don't harden their hearts, they soften their hearts toward the Jews."

The error of replacement theology will be one of the topics at a national conference to be held January 20-21, at The Church On The Way, in Los Angeles, Ca. McCartney and several Christian pastors as well as Jewish Rabbis will also discuss reconciliation between Jewish and Christian believers, understanding the Jewish roots of Christianity and the roots of anti-Semitism.

McCartney began his coaching career in the 1970's at the University of Michigan, where he served as an assistant alongside Miles under Bo Schembechler. While at Michigan, McCartney said he had "a born again" experience in 1974 at a Campus Crusade for Christ meeting.

In the 1980's, McCartney took the University of Colorado football team from a consistently losing team to the national championship in 1990 and netted many coaching awards along the way. He left coaching in 1992 to start Promise Keepers, a nationwide group that brought more than a million Christian men to a 1997 rally in Washington D.C., and has, according to Promise Keepers officials, inspired five million men to stand up for their faith and their families.

McCartney has authored four books, serves on the board of directors of Equip Foundation and Concerts of Prayer International. He and his wife, Lyndi, have four grown children and 10 grandchildren. They attend Faith Bible Chapel in Arvada, Colorado.

ON THE INTERNET:

<http://www.roadtojerusalem.org>