

A PREZ RELEASE

from AGTS

*Monthly commentary from the President of the
Assemblies of God Theological Seminary*

Kobe, What Were You Thinking? July 2003

Basketball superstar Kobe Bryant of the Los Angeles Lakers has just entered a new level of reality. The virtual reality of athletic stardom has evaporated with the charge of sexual assault against Bryant. These kinds of high-visibility events are increasingly the fodder of sports talk radio and ESPN commentary. Opinions are highly polarized and do not necessarily follow gender lines.

This episode goes beyond the usual banter about athletes because it will give visibility to everything we have become in America. Endorsements of cutthroat business entrepreneurs are on the line. The chemistry of a basketball team is up for grabs. We are inundated with Kobe's "class-act" and "family-friendly" image. We are exposed to the "truth" about the young lady making the accusation. She failed to make the cut on "American Idol". She overdosed on drugs several months ago. All this "investigative reporting" is mere legal spin that is the expected posturing before a potential trial and accompanying media circus.

Fame does weird things to good people. It distances you from the reality of accountability. You begin to believe your own press reports and, in this case, bet against the odds that you'll not get caught. You increasingly convince yourself that you deserve some latitude on your behavior—the self-talk goes something like this: we're all human and what can you expect when these sports groupies are hanging around all the time?

We know Kobe admits to adultery. He cheated on his wife and seven month old child. Unfortunately that doesn't even get another glance these days. He's mad at himself and I certainly hope that this is not the end of his marriage. But the appeal for privacy and normal treatment is not going to happen. When you sell your name to hawk Nike's, McDonald's and Sprite for 15 million dollars at a shot, you have renounced your privacy. In our consumer world—the devil is in the details and the details of this deal say Kobe cannot go into hiding and make this go away with the spin of high-priced lawyers.

I don't know what the real story is here. I am not joyful at the demise of a star. Neither can I be blind to a 19-year-old whose life is forever scarred. Kobe wasn't tricked. He's lived in the limelight and knows a groupie when he sees one. The

humanity that lurks just below the surface in all of us wiggled free. The “mea culpa” theme will be played out on Court TV, the court of public opinion and the court in Colorado, but Kobe has fallen like Samson because he believed that he could live life without suffering the consequences of his actions.

Byron D. Klaus, President
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Last call! You still have time! You still have another chance to hear Leonard Sweet at General Council 2003. Make plans to attend the “*Ministry on the Edge: The Mission to Post-Christian America*” on July 28 (6-9 p.m.) and July 29 (9 a.m. – 3 p.m.). Seminar will be held in Room 210 at the Washington Convention Center. Dr. Sweet, author of *Soul Tsunami* and *Carpe Manana*, will focus on developing and sustaining ministry for the changing culture for the new century. Graduate credit available. For further information or to register, call Randy Walls at 800-467-2487, ext 1044 or visit www.agseminary.edu

Are you an alumnus/nae of AGTS? Join us for our alumni reception at General Council 2003—August 2 at 9:00 p.m. in Room 151B of the Washington Convention Center.