

## **Florida Baptist Historical Society Biography Collection**

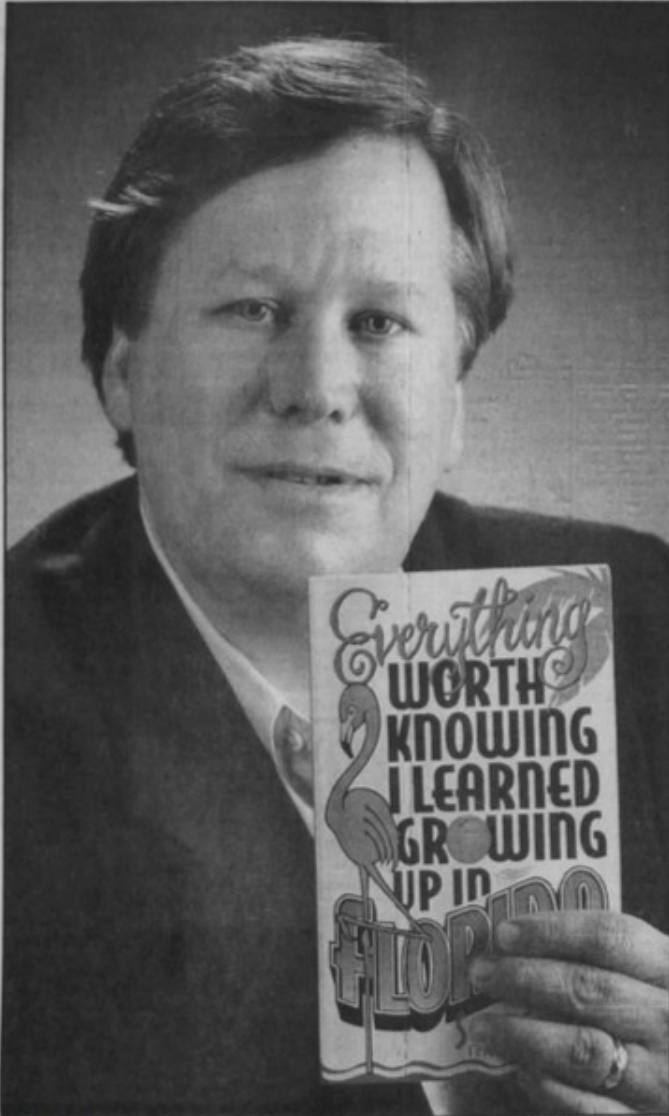
**This link provides the specific resource information which documents and undergirds the biographical resource information on a specific Florida Baptist pastors, church staff or significant laity leaders.**

The link you have chosen connects to the specific individual's resource files that provide the basis for information which the Historical Society has used to develop the respective biographical profile. The sources attached may include copies of articles gleaned from back issues of the *Florida Baptist Witness* and other news publications. Other resources include books, historical journal articles and church histories that are cited as documentation for the biography.

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**James Henry “Jay” Strack** (1953) is a native of Fort Myers, Florida. He graduated from Charleston Southern University, Luther Rice Seminary and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. Strack's Florida ministry included serving as pastor of Friendship Baptist Church, Immokalee, Florida (1972-1973) and Riverside Baptist Church, Fort Myers, Florida (1981-1984). He served as an evangelist for the Jay Strack Evangelistic Association, a Dallas-based ministry which he founded in 1975. In 2000, Strack co-founded Student Leadership University to serve youth pastors and train students in leadership principles. Strack is an effective communicator, author and minister who now resides in Orlando, Florida. He served as first vice president for the Southern Baptist Convention, 1993-1994. Strack and his wife, Diane Strack have two daughters.

# 'And it came to pass in Florida ...'



Jay Strack, a Fort Myers native, holds his new book, "Everything Worth Knowing I Learned Growing Up in Florida."

Writer uses Sunshine State as setting for book of parables with motivational message.

By PHILIP MORGAN  
Tribune Staff Writer

TAMPA — Talking to crowds was heaven for Jay Strack long before he became an evangelist and a Zig Ziglar competitor on the motivational speaking circuit.

It comes from being the child of an alcoholic father and several alcoholic stepfathers, Strack said.

"Children of alcoholics tend to be either peacemakers or the class clown. ... I was desperate for attention," said Strack, 39, who was in Tampa this week.

That need has served him well in a 22-year career of speaking before crowds. He addresses more than a million people a year, according to his publicity releases.

The traveling preacher who lectures to schoolchildren on drugs and morality is in demand by business executives seeking to fire up their employees.

He gives tips on getting along with others, working in a business environment and climbing the ladder of success. He talks to home builders, computer company owners, car sales staffs and business executive organizations. He charges for his secular talks, but said he doesn't name a fee — he leaves it up to the group that invites him.

"I've gotten as much as \$5,000, and I've gotten \$250."

Strack has been a guest on Sally Jessy Raphael's TV show and has appeared on CNN, the "MacNeil-Lehrer NewsHour" and Pat Robertson's television show, "The 700 Club."

The Fort Myers native, who now lives in Dallas, was in Tampa to promote his ninth book, "Everything Worth Knowing I Learned Growing Up in Florida."

"This was a book trying to use major cities and attractions in Florida as a parable — with a short, everyday story in which we can see ourselves, but it's got an important truth. And if we'll apply those truths to our lives, I believe we can jumpstart our life, our marriage, our career or whatever."

He uses Walt Disney's theme park creation near Orlando to transmit the message of the importance of having a personal vision; the

Daytona Beach car-racing mecca to "move off the starting line" of life; and the Kennedy Space Center to "reach for the stars."

For Tampa, he uses pirates to talk about people who are "takers," and patriots — such as Desert Storm commander and Tampa resident H. Norman Schwarzkopf — to praise "givers."

Strack traces his success to "an experience with the Lord" at age 17, when his life was in the depths.

He tells of his bleak childhood: His father had been a successful businessman who owned interest in various automobile dealerships.

"We had everything, but my father had a drinking problem," said Strack. His father left the family for another woman when Strack was 6.

His mother, "on the rebound, I guess to prove her attractiveness," made some poor choices in husbands.

"So I went through four broken homes by the seventh grade, six by the 10th grade."

Several stepfathers were alcoholics and abusive to young Strack. "I call them hurricanes of hurt. They just kind of blow through your life."

Some called him a loser and beat him.

"I've been kept home from school up to two weeks so no one would see the marks on my body. Of course it would be in a drunken rage, and the next day it's, 'I'm sorry and I'll never do it again.'"

As a teenager, Strack said, "I started drinking. I was arrested four times for drug possession. And I've been in and out of detention centers in several counties here in Florida."

He said at a time when "my grades bit the dust and all the dreams that I had bit the dust," he was "born again" in the Christian faith. "It's like somebody turned the light back on inside me."

He started telling his story to groups. He appealed to his classmates at Fort Myers High School to turn their lives around, to stop drinking and taking drugs.

He became minister of a small church in Immokalee for a year and then went to college. He has degrees from Charleston (S.C.) Southern University, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, and Luther Rice Seminary in Jacksonville.

"I found out there's another way to live. You don't find life in a bottle, pill or cheap thrill."

JIM REED/Tribune photo

## Riverside, Fort Myers (Royal Palm)

Harmony Baptist in North Fort Myers was approved as a mission of Riverside in October 1978. Riverside assumed its debt and assets, and our members disciplined its leadership. It was decided to change their name from Harmony to Twin Brooks Baptist Mission. Application was made to the State Mission Board for pastoral assistance. Rev. Stan Berrong was licensed by Riverside into the gospel ministry and he served as their pastor for 8 years. Continuing under the direction of Riverside's Mission Committee, they prepared to operate independently. With continued growth, the mission constituted as Twin Brooks Baptist Church on April 4, 1982.

### **1979 Lee Boulevard Baptist Mission**

Riverside's Mission Committee continued to pursue a church plant in Lehigh Acres. A prime location on Lee Blvd was located and through the Florida Baptist Convention Grant Program four acres were purchased in August 1979. Riverside contracted for the building and ground-breaking services for Lee Blvd Mission was held December 7, 1980. Meanwhile, Otis Guy started a Bible study and prayer meeting May 1981 at the home of Carl and Lee Bryson with 15 people attending. Dr. Claude Wilson, Associate Pastor of Riverside, was called August 1981 as first pastor of Lee Blvd Mission. Anticipation grew as the church building progressed, and the first Sunday worship service was held November 8, 1981, in the yet to be completed building; 23 people became members that day. The formal dedication of Lee Boulevard Baptist Church was held March 28, 1982, with special guest speakers and dinner on the grounds. Dr. Wilson served as pastor 34 years until his death in 2015.



### **Rev. Jay Strack 1981 – 1984**

1981 would be a year of change for Riverside. Upon the departure of pastor Love it was time to seek God's direction for the future. This prayerful deliberation resulted in the calling of Rev Jay Strack. Jay grew up in Ft Myers and weathering troubled early years had fully dedicated himself to Christ; he used his life experiences to become a dynamic communicator with a big vision. Under Jay's leadership and the organization of Clayton Spriggs, Assistant Pastor and Minister of Education, we became *Exciting Riverside Baptist Church- Where Worship is in Spirit and Truth*. We were challenged in personal discipleship, sharing our faith, and weekly visitation. We had a determined focus for Sunday School growth, grand outreach events and county-wide crusades. Riverside held Easter music/drama productions, a July extravaganza and our first Living Christmas Tree musical. Jay had a clear way of telling the gospel message and people were being saved- 321 baptisms during his first 10 months. To accommodate growth, we remodeled, Children's Sunday School classes were moved to Edgewood Elementary School and additional property was purchased. August 1983 we added a Christian college. October 1983 Jay laid out a 5-year plan of ministry - Quest for the Rainbow. Our TV ministry equipment was updated and WSOR radio tower raised to 360 ft. and operated 24 hours/day. We implemented a capital campaign to build a new educational building to raise money for the 1.5 million dollar project. Though Jay felt called in a new direction in 1985, his dream was fulfilled not long after his departure as we built an educational building and opened a Christian school.



Wanda Reed, left, of Seneca uses sign language to lead hearing impaired members of the audience in a song during **Jay Strack's** evangelical crusade at Seneca High School Wednesday night.

Greg Beckner Independent-Mail

# Evangelist crusade targets young

By Eric Gorski  
Oconee-Pickens Bureau

SENECA - When **Jay Strack** steps to the microphone of the Seneca High School gymnasium, he takes special care to address the young people who are kneeling on the floor up front.

The 39-year-old evangelist with a boyish round face and a sharp wit has the ability to catch a kid's ear, and he's eager to steer them away from what he indulged in as a youth: drugs, alcohol and irresponsibility.

For the past four nights during one of the approximately 20 crusades he conducts each year, Dr. **Strack** offered Jesus Christ as an alternative.

"I think we're seeing a side of

young people that is very encouraging," said Dr. **Strack**, who has preached in crusades since he was 19. "A lot of them have watched their parents, who've been too busy for church. They see the divorce rate, the tension in our homes, the alcohol consumed in our homes. They've looked at what life without the Lord has to offer."

More than 2,000 people have packed the Seneca gym each night this week for the crusade, which will wrap up at 7 p.m. tonight.

The crusade is aimed at what Dr. **Strack** calls creating a "God consciousness," or excitement, in the community. Each night he invites audience members

who haven't accepted Jesus Christ as their savior to do so.

As of Tuesday night, more than 225 people had come forward.

Another tenet of Dr. **Strack's** preaching is his belief that people are mistaken in thinking that just being on a church roll qualifies them as a Christian.

"We never let God do work in our lives because we say, 'I'm this, I'm that,'" he told Tuesday's audience.

Dr. **Strack** says it's difficult to come to a community as an outsider - especially as an evangelist.

"My profession has been a bowl of granola - fruit, flakes and nuts," he said.

Before passing the collection

basket each night, crusade officials explain where the cash goes.

For a crusade in a town the size of Seneca, the ministry clears \$10,000 to \$20,000, Dr. **Strack** said. The ministry's weekly budget is \$16,000. Dr. **Strack** said none of the money goes to him.

The Rev. Mark Spearman of Corinth Baptist Church in Seneca, an organizer of the Seneca crusade, said the real work begins once a crusade is over.

"You can have a crusade come through town and do wonderful things, but after they leave, what has that accomplished?" he said. "Our goal is to get people drawn back into the local church."

# No tall tales

Claims of a drug- and alcohol-wracked youth serve the Rev. **Jay Strack** well. But they're not entire story, say those who were there.

By ANN RODGERS-MELNICK  
News-Press Staff Writer

The Rev. **Jay Strack** has built a preaching career not only on the Bible, but on tales of his immersion in drugs and drinking as a youth in Fort Myers — where he still lives between speaking engagements.

He speaks in public high schools and preaches in stadiums around the country, warning young people of the dangers of drugs and alcohol. He has updated his book, "Drugs and Drinking: What Every Teen and Parent Should Know," and had edited the notes for a Bible, "The Transformer," geared toward getting teen-agers to ask questions about their lifestyles.

Cynics might suspect that the clean-cut **Strack**, now a good friend of the Rev. Jerry Falwell, had concocted, or at least exaggerated, his history to convert himself from a small-time sinner to a big-time evangelist. But according to those who knew **Strack** before his conversion to Christianity, what his press packet describes only skims the surface of his troubled past.

"**Jay** is an example to all of us whose problems seem insurmountable," said Edgar Wilson Jr., **Strack's** best friend from their days at Fort Myers High School and still his friend despite their religious and political differences. "He is the perfect evidence that there is no such thing as a hopeless case. I never expected **Jay** to do anything. I didn't see how he could have become anything but a drug dealer or a barker at a carnival."

**Strack** was born 32 years ago in Orlando, where his alcoholic father took all the money and ran off with another woman when **Strack** was six. With his mother's serial remarriages — all to alcoholics — **Strack** survived six broken homes.

By the time his mother moved to Fort Myers

when he was 8 or 9 years old, **Strack** said, he was so starved for attention that he was a problem in school. A salvaged report card from Edgewood Elementary notes, "If **Jay** would try as hard to be a good student as he does to aggravate people, he would be an A student."

Although he hated what alcohol had done to his family, he was desperate to fit in with the crowd. By the end of seventh grade he spent every weekend getting drunk with his buddies at the beach, he said.

"Sin, sex, booze and fun — we're the class of '71! And we were that way — although there wasn't much sex, I'll say that," Wilson recalled, quoting the unofficial class motto that he and **Strack** recited. They also led the student body in more official cheers as MC's of pep rallies.

"We were somewhat like entertainers, which is where **Jay's** and my strengths lay," said Wilson, who after a theater career undermined by drinking, sobered up and now manages his father's architectural firm in Fort Myers. "**Jay** always felt that he had something to say and he has always loved being controversial. He thrives on it. He's an attention getter. And why not? Do we have to castigate him for it?"

Actually, Wilson admitted, when he first met **Strack** during their sophomore year, he didn't like him. "I thought he was the most obnoxious person I had ever met. He was always cutting people down, belittling them. It was his way of getting attention." He became **Strack's** friend, however, because he caught glimpses of charm and sensitivity beneath his class-clown antics.

"The friends I had grown up with all said he was a jerk and my mother was always saying, 'If you hang around with **Jay Strack** you're going to get into trouble,'" Wilson said.

They drank together in the woods where Fid-

desticks Country Club is now. "It wasn't just social drinking. We would go out to get drunk. If **Jay** could drink a gallon of Ball Hal, he had accomplished something," Wilson said.

Lee County Sheriff Frank Wanicka was one of Fort Myers' two narcotics officers during those years, and **Jay Strack**, long-haired hippie, was well known to the force, Wanicka said. They arrested him several times for possession of drugs with intention to distribute.

Wilson, who once tuned into the nationally televised "700 Club" to hear **Strack** tell his story, said that **Strack** downplayed the depth of his problems. Probably, Wilson said, **Strack** doesn't remember the worst times because he was so far gone.

**Strack** would try anything, Wilson said. Once he inhaled a combination of freon and aerosol deodorant. "He started breaking into shivers. I covered him with blankets and I was terrified," Wilson said. "I thought he was going to die."

In early June of 1970, **Strack** said, he was driving home from a party, high on LSD. When he went to turn a corner where he thought he saw a light, he crashed into Jack's Radio Taxi stand, demolishing several cabs. He fought with the officers who came to the scene and was thrown into the Juvenile Detention Center off Gladiolus Drive.

He had hair well past his shoulders, and the guard who escorted him to the delousing shower teased him about it. Although today **Strack** says he was so high he can't be sure of who said what to whom, he thought the guard was making advances toward him. They got into a fight and the guard called in several large men who held **Strack** down and shaved his head.

See **STRACK**, page 4D

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## Strack *From page 1D*

But during that summer in detention, Strack's head was free not only of hair, but of drugs and alcohol.

"I thought, Here I am, I'm going to be a senior and I've been doing exactly the same thing since seventh or eighth grade. I knew I had to get it together, but I didn't know how."

Out of detention in time to start his senior year, he discovered the Jesus Movement had come to Fort Myers. Several of his friends now preferred reading the Bible to partying. Strack's religious background consisted of a few childhood visits to St. Luke's Episcopal Church. "Now a lot of people were praying for me and harassing me to go to a Bible study with them," he said.

He went. "I felt welcome there," he said. "It was the first time I had ever heard the gospel."

On the Friday night after Thanksgiving 1970, in a home on Central Avenue, Strack said, he asked Jesus Christ into his life. Then he went home, disposed of his drugs, sweated out withdrawal and studied hard enough to graduate from high school.

"Many people were skeptical about the change in Jay — and in some other kids who did radical flip-flops," Wilson said. "I thought he was going to the Bible studies because of the girls there."

Many of their old friends still criticize Strack for preaching about morality, because of what he was then, said Wilson, who stands up for Strack.

"I don't go to his church or abide by his beliefs, but I would much rather have Jay the way he is now than the way he was then. It's unbelievable all of the friends I have from Fort Myers for whom alcohol and drugs have ruined their lives. That is what Jay is trying to change and it's good if he can change people around."

Three or four years ago when Wilson hit bottom after years of heavy drinking, Strack was one of the friends he called on for help, and Strack responded, Wilson said. "He came and talked to me and we prayed. Now I feel thankful, very thankful for him doing that. There were times when I called on my own priest, who advised me. But Jay knew the pain I was going through because he had been there himself."

Strack's school buddies weren't the only people skeptical of him in his early days as a Christian. When he and two long-haired friends showed up for a Stetson University extension course on the Old Testament, recalled Fred Williams, the instructor, "I thought, 'They have come to tear up my class.'"

However, Williams said, "He sat right up front and asked intelligent and valid questions." Williams, then director of missions for the Royal Palm Baptist Association, asked Strack to have a cup of coffee with him after class.

Williams was deeply impressed with Strack's story and began inviting him to speak at Southern Baptist youth revivals. Though Strack was just 19, he was called to pastor Friendship Baptist Church in Immokalee. In one year's time Strack brought that congregation up from 30 members to 300, with 200 in Sunday school and a weekly offering of

close to \$8,000, Williams recalled.

Williams urged Strack to go to college and seminary, but six Bible colleges rejected him because of his academic and criminal records. Meanwhile, Strack had married Diane Rasso. They met at a Bible study, where she first thought he called too much attention to himself. "But everywhere we went we would run into each other and we developed a friendship," she said.

Today if they met a young couple similar to themselves back then, she said, they would urge them to wait to get married — which is just what everyone around them did. "My mother didn't like Jay," she said. "She said, 'What are you doing? He has no future.' He had no job, no money and didn't know what he wanted to do."

They went off to South Carolina together when Strack was finally accepted at The Baptist College in Charleston, where Strack completed four years of work in two, even while preaching revivals on the weekend. His first city-wide revival was held in an abandoned Piggly-Wiggly supermarket in Ninety-Six, S.C. — a town named for its population, Strack jokes.

By the time he headed off to Southwestern Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, he had formed the Jay Strack Evangelistic Association, the business aspect of his preaching.

In Texas, Strack was invited to preach at the church attended by James Robison, one of the best known evangelists in the nation. Robison was in the congregation that night. "With James, everything is either the best or the worst he's ever seen, and, fortunately, I wasn't the worst," Strack said. Robison invited the Stracks to have dinner at his home the next night, where they sat

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hands is a biblical thing. It's not a charismatic thing, it's the Christian thing to do."



Williams recalled. He asked Strack to go to a seminary, but six Bible teachers told him because of his criminal records. Strack had married Diemet at a Bible study, but thought he called too much to himself. "But eventually we would run into each other," he said.

Strack met a young couple in the 1960s. They were back then, she urged them to wait to get married, which is just what they did. "My wife is Jay," she said. "What are you doing? He had no job, no money, I don't know what he

was doing." Strack moved to South Carolina. Strack was finally accepted at Baptist College in Greenville. Strack completed his degree in two, even while working on the weekend. A revival was held in Piggly-Wiggly supermarket in Ninety-Six, S.C. — a town with a population of 10,000. Strack joked

that he headed off to theological seminary. Strack had formed the Jay Wiggly Association, the name of his preaching.

Strack was invited to a church attended by one of the best preachers in the nation. Robinson

was up until 3 a.m. discussing theology and the Bible.

From then on, Robinson invited Strack to accompany him on his evangelistic crusades. Strack became so busy with preaching that he dropped out of school, and did not complete his master's degree until last year — following it with a doctorate this year.

While Robinson was teaching Strack the ropes of big time evangelism and introducing him to most of the nation's leading evangelists, Strack was teaching Robinson about the youth culture, even taking him to a rock concert to observe first hand the teen-agers smoking, snorting and shooting drugs and the young girls begging the band members to take them back to their hotel.

When Strack decided to branch off on his own, he hired Robinson's crusade coordinator, the Rev. Clayton Spriggs.

Spriggs was an architect of the religious right, having helped engineer fundamentalist support for Ronald Reagan in 1980. Through Spriggs, Strack became good friends with the better-known leaders of the religious right, such as Jerry Falwell and Tim LaHaye.

When Strack accepted the call to pastor Riverside Baptist Church in Fort Myers in 1981, Spriggs came with him as associate pastor.

Strack said he returned to Fort Myers because he and Diane had two young daughters and he worried about being away from them while

preaching around the country.

He hesitated, however, wondering whether Fort Myers could accept him as a preacher when it had known him as a hoodlum.

"I had a reporter ask me, 'Don't you know that a prophet is without honor in his hometown?'" Strack said. "But I don't think of myself as a prophet. I'm like the man that Jesus cast the unclean spirits out of and then told him to go back to tell his family and friends what the Lord had done for him."

Under Strack's leadership, Riverside Baptist Church changed its name to Exciting Riverside Baptist Church, nearly doubled in size to 3,500 members, televised its services, expanded its 24-hour radio station and took Gulf Shore Bible College — presided over by Strack's old mentor Williams — under its wing.

As much as he loved pastoring Riverside, and misses it now, Strack said he felt God calling him back to full-time evangelism.

Among his goals — and one he is working on — is to become a big-time TV preacher, but one who reaches young people.

Still, he said, if God sent him back to preach in a Piggly-Wiggly store in Ninety-Six, S.C., he would go.

"I hope that 50 years from now, I will be known as a man who tells the truth, and I want to say it graciously," he said. "I want my life to count. I want to be known as a preacher, to be used by the Lord and to keep my life right with God."

# Evangelist to lead church Youth Fest

MAYFIELD, Ky. — Dr. **Jay Strack** of Orlando, Fla., will be the evangelist for the Trace Creek Baptist Church Youth Fest 1994 at 6:30 p.m. Saturday.

A pizza blast opens the evening at 4 p.m., and singing by the Martins will start at 5.



**STRACK**

**Strack**, an evangelist and author, attended Southwestern Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas. He graduated cum laude with a bachelor's degree from Charleston Southern University in South Carolina. He received his master of divinity degree in 1984 and his doctor of ministry degree in 1986, both from Luther Rice Seminary in Jacksonville, Fla.

**Strack** is the author of several books and founder of the **Jay Strack** Association, a Dallas-based evangelistic ministry.

**Strack** and his wife, Diane, have two children.

## Jay Strack speaks at First Baptist

Dr. Jay Strack of Orlando, Fla., will speak during the morning and evening services at the First Baptist Church of Hattiesburg Sunday.

Strack is an effective communicator, author and minister who overcame a drug addiction as an adolescent. He has spoken to an estimated 7 million people in his 24 years of ministry.



Strack

He is a former vice president of the Southern Baptist Convention and served on various national and presidential drug task force committees. He has written nine books and speaks to conventions and meetings about 300 days a year.

The public is invited to attend. Child care will be provided. First Baptist Church is located at 510 W. Pine St.

# Evangelist to speak at First Baptist

By Jovida Fletcher

OF THE SENTINEL STAFF

The Rev. **Jay Strack**, well-known Southern Baptist evangelist, will be guest speaker at the 10:55 a.m. worship service July 2 at First Baptist Church in Kissimmee.

**Strack** is a former pastor of Riverside Baptist Church in Fort Myers, a past vice president of the Southern Baptist Convention and since 1975 has been president of **Jay Strack** Ministries based in Orlando.

Everyone is invited to attend the service at the church, 1700 N. Bermuda Ave., Kissimmee.

*Some of the approximately 3,000 members of Riverside Baptist Church in East Fort Myers head into the church's 2,200-seat auditorium on a recent Sunday.*

# The power and glory of Riverside Baptist

Pastor **Jay Strack's** vision knows no earthly bounds as church reaches ever outward

By PETER G. JOHNSON  
News-Press Staff Writer

Lord only knows what the future holds for Riverside Baptist Church — and Lord knows no one could have predicted what has passed.

What started 67 years ago as a tiny mission church without enough money to pay a pastor has grown into a virtual million-dollar conglomerate covering three city blocks in East Fort Myers.

Riverside's interests are nearly as plentiful as parables in the Bible. Consider the following:

- Each Sunday for more than 20 years Riverside has broadcast its services to thousands of TV viewers from a fully-equipped studio that would be the envy of many television stations.

- Thousands more are reached through the church's own 24-hour FM radio station, the first one owned and operated by a Southern Baptist church in Florida.

- Countless others are able to attend church because of Riverside's fleet of buses, its four mission churches and its ministries for the deaf and retarded.

Whether it was through good fortune or divine inspiration, these all have combined to make Riverside one of the largest and most visible churches in Lee County.

Next target, the rest of the country.

It may sound brash, but Riverside's pastor, Rev. Jay Strack, has his sights set on propelling Riverside into the big leagues of Baptist churches, right up there with Jerry Falwell's church in Lynchburg, Va., or W.A. Criswell's in Dallas, Texas.

A former drug abuser turned evangelist, the 29-year-old Strack hopes to accomplish this by following a carefully-conceived five year plan that is just beginning to unfold.

The first step is to put the weekly broadcast of Riverside's Sunday morning service on national television, a move that may not be as remote as it sounds.

Representatives of the Billy Graham ministry and the Walter F. Bennett Co. — the largest purchaser of religious programming in the United States — are due to meet soon with Strack to discuss going nationwide.

"A lot depends on finances," Strack acknowledges. But he adds, "We believe in the not too distant future our services will be seen across the country."

National television exposure may be the start, but it isn't the end of what Strack hopes to accomplish.

"Our vision is to win Lee County and then to touch the world," he says.

Strack believes Riverside is capable of achieving everything Falwell has at the Thomas Road Baptist Church in Lynchburg, a church that has approximately 20,000 members in a town of 60,000.

"He's won a third of the city to the Lord, he's the number two or three most-watched man in America and now he's got a college there," Strack says, referring to Liberty Baptist College. "From where he is, he's touched the nation. Now he's turning out ministers that are touching the world.

"I like that kind of vision and I think we can do all that and more here. After all, we have a much bigger pond to fish out of."

Strack's personal ambitions are just as lofty as those for his church: "I'd like to preach to more people face-to-face than anyone who's ever lived."

The man who currently holds that distinction is Billy Graham, the world-famous evangelist who has preached the gospel to many millions since embarking on his first crusade in the early 1940s.

Strack is uncomfortable with the suggestion that he wants to become the next Graham. He says he does not seek Graham's fame or fortune — or the invasion of his private life that undoubtedly would accompany such status.

"Who wants the threats on your life?" Strack asks.

However, the preacher says his dream would be to accomplish just what Graham has in the last four decades.

Strack says he would like to make an impact with people currently between the ages of 13 and 40 and then "grow old with them," just as Graham did with his generation.

"When I look at someone I would like to pattern my life after, it's Billy Graham," Strack says. "Certainly my dream would be to win as many people to Christ."

Strack adds, "I think it would be the dream of every preacher."

Becoming a preacher is one dream Strack never had as a boy growing up in Fort Myers. Before being saved as a teen-ager, Strack's only thoughts of hell were how much he could raise.

"I didn't ask to be a preacher," he says. "It was the last thing I ever dreamed of."

The product of a broken home, Strack grew up near

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# Riverside *From page 1D*

Riverside Baptist Church and remembers throwing rocks through the windows of the church buses. Luckily for him, the church elders were not fast enough to catch him.

By the time **Strack** was 14 he was drinking beer with his buddies. Later he graduated to marijuana and other drugs, mostly methamphetamine (speed).

"I don't remember ever going to a dance or date not high," he said.

Eventually **Strack's** lifestyle caught up with him. He was arrested three times and wound up in a juvenile detention home after the third arrest.

Then one day a friend invited him to attend a Bible study meeting in a Central Avenue home. **Strack** reluctantly agreed.

"I went one time mainly to get him off my back," says **Strack**. "I heard the Gospel for the first time that night. Gospel means 'good news' and it was good news to me."

**Strack** was "born again" that night. He was 17.

At age 19, **Strack** was ordained and became pastor of the 17-member Friendship Baptist Church in Immokalee.

After a year and a half there, he went to Bible college in South Carolina, graduating in 1975. He then took his show on the road with the **Jay Strack Evangelical Association**.

His travels have taken him to 39 states and numerous foreign countries, including Israel 17 times. He has "saved" untold numbers of people — 14,000 last year alone, he says.

**Strack** became Riverside's pastor about 1½ years ago but he continues to make crusades. This week, for example, he's off to Charlotte, N.C., Pittsburgh and New York.

Whether speaking at Riverside or on the road, **Strack** has a talent for capturing his audience's attention. He is a dynamic speaker whose only flaw may be his rapid-fire delivery that sometimes moves too rapidly.

**Strack's** preaching style is somewhere between that of a pulpit-pounder and an erudite theologian. He quotes extensively from the Bible but is just as likely to quote from the Beatles.

Somehow he manages to mix his fundamentalist views with contemporary humor to produce a sermon that is both spiritual and entertaining. His weekly sermons generally have the desired effects of stirring dozens of people into proclaiming Jesus Christ as their saviour.

"I'm a reaper, I have the gift of evangelism. I didn't

seek that gift, I didn't ask for it and I can't take any credit for it because the Lord could lift his hand at any time," says **Strack**.

In addition to being blessed with the gift of evangelism, **Strack** believes the Lord has graced him by providing a prosperous pulpit from which to shout his message.

With its \$890,000 operating budget funded entirely from tithes — usually 10 percent of an individual's income — and contributions, Riverside certainly qualifies as prosperous. The church radio station, WSOR-FM, operates on a separate budget of about \$180,000 a year, with its money coming from both donations and paid advertising.

The modern-day Riverside, with its computers and electronic equipment, is a far cry from the church established on Dec. 23, 1916, as a mission of the First Baptist Church in Fort Myers.

Then called the Edgewood Baptist Church, it could not afford its own pastor and had to share First Baptist's. But with the help of \$250 from the State Mission Board, the little church got a pastor all its own in February 1917. He was Dr. A.J. Holt of Arcadia.

Slowly the church membership grew and in 1925 the name was changed to Second Baptist Church of Fort Myers. It was changed again to Riverside Baptist in August 1942 because some members believed Second Baptist somehow implied inferiority to First Baptist.

Riverside now has approximately 3,000 members, and **Strack** expects the number to grow by another 1,000 this year. Ultimately, he expects membership at Riverside to reach 10,000-12,000.

"It would be easy for me to take credit for this," **Strack** says, "but the truth is I followed two good men who did a great job."

**Strack** and others trace the turning point at Riverside to the appointment of Rev. E.S. "Andy" Anderson as pastor in 1956. A man of vision, Anderson is credited with starting many innovative programs during the 19 years he preached at Riverside, including the televising of the Sunday services and the start of the radio station.

"I inherited a great deal because of the vision of Andy Anderson," **Strack** says. "Many of the programs he started and the direction he pointed the church probably are the biggest reasons Riverside is where it is today."

Anderson still lives in Fort Myers but travels throughout the country working for the Southern Baptist Convention. He remembers the church was basically stagnant when he arrived.

"It had had some good pastors but it was in a non-growth situation," he said.

Anderson started programs designed to increase Riverside's membership and attendance. Many of those programs are employed now by other churches of all denominations, he said.

"Almost every growth program being used in Christianity today I developed," Anderson said.

In the late 1950s Anderson started the television ministry at Riverside. It began as a 15-minute weekly telecast in which he would counsel an anonymous person who sat with his or her back to the camera.

Later, in about 1962, Riverside bought its own television cameras — the church had three black-and-white cameras while WINK-TV, the only station in town at the time, had only one — and started broadcasting the Sunday morning service.

Approximately two years later, Riverside became the first Southern Baptist church to own and operate its own radio station.

Anderson is a tad modest when it comes to discussing his accomplishments at the church. "All I did was lay the foundation," he says. "The men who followed me have taken it where it is now."

Anderson's successor in 1975 was Rev. Bill Love, a folksy, fire-and-brimstone preacher who brought attention to Riverside with his vocal involvement in several political issues in Lee County.

Love made headlines with his crusades against topless dancing, pornography and homosexuality. He also led an unsuccessful campaign to prohibit the sale of beer at Terry Park, the spring-training home of the Kansas City Royals.

Not everyone applauded the preacher's outspokenness. On several occasions the church services had to be halted because of bomb threats, and Love reported receiving other threats on his life.

But overall, Riverside enjoyed a period of growth in both size and influence during Love's six years.

Now the pastor at Crestview Baptist Church in San Antonio, Texas, Love downplays his role in the fight against those social issues. He says he was "only the spark that ignited the fire" and if he hadn't done it, someone else would have.

"Being at Riverside with the media exposure certainly was an advantage," Love said. "But any other man could have done what I did — and probably with more success."

Love said he takes more pride in the construction of the new auditorium and in the improvements made to the radio station and television studio during his tenure.

When he arrived, the church services were held in a

small, old auditorium. Now, services are held in a plush, spacious auditorium with a seating capacity of 2,200.

It was no accident that the new sanctuary was built with wide aisles and plenty of space between the pews. **Strack** says it was designed that way to make it easier for people to get out of their seats and come to the altar to be saved.

"In some churches you have to be a pole vaulter to be saved," **Strack** jokes.

During Love's tenure, Riverside also bought all new equipment for the TV studio and completely renovated the radio station.

Improvements in this area have continued under **Strack**. Recently, the hours of the radio station were expanded from 18 to 24 hours a day, and transformers are being installed in Port Charlotte and Naples to help spread the message.

**Strack** also has carried on Love's habit of speaking out on controversial issues. Last October, for instance, he protested abortion laws by holding a funeral for two fetuses allegedly recovered from garbage bags behind a Port Charlotte doctor's office.

But **Strack's** plans for Riverside are far more detailed than merely carrying on the programs and practices of his predecessors.

"We know everything we hope to do in the next five years," he says.

The public, however, must wait until October before learning the specifics of **Strack's** five-year plan. He is reluctant to reveal the details now out of fear that opposition to some aspects could develop.

All he'll say is he envisions Riverside someday sponsoring a home for unwed mothers, an alcohol and drug rehabilitation clinic, and a gymnasium/recreational center for the church youth.

His plans for this and more will be outlined in a multi-media presentation scheduled for church members in early October. In the meantime, the church staff is furiously figuring out how much money will be needed to achieve each goal.

**Strack** recognizes there may be those who think his plans are intended to promote himself instead of the church. He bristles at this suggestion and insists he is merely fulfilling the duty assigned him by God.

"My desire to go on nationwide TV is not to promote **Jay Strack**," he says. "**Jay Strack** is just a junkie who got saved in Fort Myers. **Jay Strack** isn't important, the message is.

"I'm just the paperboy delivering the message."

<https://wikibin.org/articles/jay-strack.html>

Jay Strack (born July 24, 1953) is an American Author and leadership speaker. He is the founder of Student Leadership University, based in Orlando, Florida and founder of The Strack Center for Global leadership and Ministry at Charleston Southern University. His teenage years included an addiction to drugs and alcohol. Strack entered Christian ministry in his late teen years. He obtained a Bachelor of Arts degree from Charleston Southern University in 1975 and then attended Luther Rice Seminary where he obtained a Master of Arts in theology in 1984 and a Doctor of Ministry in 1985. Strack was awarded honorary doctorates from Louisiana College, Southwest Baptist College, Charleston Southern University, and Trinity Baptist College.

#### Ministry

Strack served as senior pastor of Friendship Baptist Church in Fort Myers before founding Jay Strack Evangelistic Ministries in 1975. Since 1975 Strack has spoken to thousands of leaders, students, and organizations such as NASA, Walt-Disney Corporation, Universal Studios, and the United States Air-Force Academy. Strack has written 25 books and resources. In 2014 he co-authored The Three Success Secrets of Shamgar with the founder of the Orlando Magic basketball team Pat Williams]].

Strack is a member of the Southern Baptist Convention and has held various leadership roles within the denomination. He was elected president of the Conference of Southern Baptist Evangelists in 1990 and later served as vice president of the Southern Baptist Convention. In 1999, Strack led an effort to lead one of the largest youth events in the history of the Southern Baptist Convention. On Dec 31, 1999, over 41,000 students gathered for a global simulcast event called YouthLink.

In 2000, Strack co-founded Student Leadership University to serve youth pastors and train students in leadership principles. Student Leadership University hosts Youth Pastors Summit (YPS) for Youth Pastors across the nation. These free events are held in Orlando, Dallas, Nashville, and Southern California. Student Leadership University also host summer events in Orlando, Washington D.C., England, and Israel.

Strack has worked with several presidential administrations, campaigns, and initiatives. In 2016 Strack served on President Donald Trump's Faith Advisory Council. This advisory group included Jack Graham, Bishop Harry Jackson, Jentezen Franklin, and others. In 2017 Strack took part in Trump's inauguration ceremonies at St. John's Episcopal Church, Lafayette Square in Washington D.C. Strack also has been interviewed by various news publications, including Washington Post, America Voice News, and others. He also has written 30 published books and served as the editor for the Impact Student Leadership Bible originally published by Thomas Nelson Publishers in 2011.

In 2020, the President of Charleston Southern University, Dondi E. Costin, announced the launch and creation of The Strack Center for Global Leadership and Ministry. The Strack Center for Global Leadership and Ministry at Charleston Southern University offers academic credit for students seeking faith-based learning opportunities. The Strack Center focuses on three areas: biblical worldview and apologetics, youth culture and ministry, and global leadership strategies.

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# On the path to salvation

## Jay Strack was born again and now hopes to lead all men to Jesus Christ

By DONNA JABLONSKI  
News-Press Staff Writer

He's going to be the next Billy Graham — at least he says he is — and will lead this whole nation to Jesus Christ.

That's quite a goal for a 23 year old who calls himself "just a young freak who gave his life to Jesus."

But the goal doesn't seem inflated to its dreamer, Jay Strack, because only seven years ago the man was a boy, a troubled boy, sitting in a Lee County detention center after being charged with possessing and distributing narcotics.

Added to his teenage drug problems, he says he had slugged a cop and threatened to kill Lee County Sheriff Frank Wanicka, then a narcotics agent. At age 16, he had two charges of driving while intoxicated tacked onto his driving record, and had totaled four taxi cabs one night while on a drunk.

But since then he's experienced a new birth and lives a new life. He's seen the world, travels often and has his own evangelical association.

And big dreams.

Strack, who was raised in Fort Myers and attended Fort Myers High School, has returned to this city from his Fort Worth, Tex., evangelical base to reach out to some old pals he thinks might need help, as well as to strangers.

"I'm not 'The Happy Hooker,'" Strack says, indicating a shiny fish hook-shaped pin on the lapel of his three-piece suit, "but I'm hooked on Jesus.

"I'm fishing for men. I'm trying to reach the men. I didn't have a daddy . . . If I can reach a daddy for Jesus Christ, I'll reach the kids, too."

Strack says his childhood in a single-parent home had a deep impact on him.

"I come from a broken home," he'll say as he explains his route through a drugged early life in Fort Myers.

"I started (toward drugs) going to my first dance in seventh grade when someone offered me a beer," which he says he accepted because of peer pressure.

"Well, beer tastes like sulphur water that's been in an Army boot for a week," he says, so he began investigating whiskey.

He and his friends were minors and could not legally buy liquor at the time. But they had what Strack calls sources or contacts who would make the purchases for them.

"One day our contact said he couldn't get any beer or booze but he said, 'Here, try some of these.'"

According to Strack, he was given marijuana.

"It was a lot better than booze because people couldn't tell as long as you kept your act together.

"I don't remember ever going to a dance or a date not drunk or high," he says.

While Strack was voyaging through a world of artificial stimuli, he says he watched his interest in school and sports (he played football) wane.

## Jay Strack attended high school in Fort Myers and was born again

He was down to D's and F's academically, and had been busted the June before his senior year.

But there was another young man at Fort Myers High School who Strack says had gone through sudden, massive changes.

The young man had been saved, he'd found Christ. He told Strack of meetings in a Central Avenue home where people got together and talked about Christ.

"I went one time mainly to get him off my back," Strack says. "I heard the Gospel. Gospel means 'good news,' and it was good news to me."

He liked learning that he could be forgiven.

"No one likes to admit they're dirty," he says. "Jesus told us we're dirty."

After being born again, Strack brought his grades up to a passing level. He got a job selling flowers through the central states.

"But I only talked about Jesus," he says. "I was winning so many men to Jesus. Then I was driving down the road and Jesus told me he wanted me to preach. I said, 'Jesus, if you want me to I'll do it.'"

Turn To **STRACK**, Page 8D

8D Fort Myers News-Press, Thursday, April 7, 1977 ★★ ★★

## Strack

From Page 1D

The next morning Strack says he got a call from the administrator of the Royal Palm Baptist Association of Lee and Collier counties, who told him he'd gotten the word from Jesus that Strack should go to Immokalee to preach.

Joking about Immokalee's reputation as a rough town, Strack says even before he was saved he would pray for help while driving through the Collier County community.

At 19, Strack was ordained ("Yep, I'm a rev," he says) and became pastor of Friendship Baptist Church in Immokalee, where he served for a year and a half. From there, Strack went to Bible college in South Carolina, graduated in 1975 after two years and took his preaching on the road.

"I've been to Israel five times, Europe twice and India twice," he says. "Jesus put my life together."

Strack says the Jay Strack Evangelical Association is attempting to set up centers for alcoholics and drug abusers.

"After they've gone through withdrawal, churches don't know what to do with them," he says.

The main counselor is a former addict, Strack says, and the evangelist's own experiences with marijuana and amphetamines enable him to understand the addicts.

Strack says he tries to make it fun to listen to him preach. He packs his talk with contemporary jargon and quotes from the singing heroes of youth — like Joe Cocker and Bob Seger. He cracks jokes, like the one about "The Happy Hooker" and makes non-accidental slips of referring to seminaries as cemeteries.

But he also seeks to be controversial, because it packs the places he preaches.

He says he preaches in bars, strip joints and that he'd preach against the Ku Klux Klan in its own headquarters.

Before coming to a town like Fort Myers, he sends out a grapevine for information about where

kids are able to buy alcohol, and what kind of drugs are being circulated.

"I don't work with the law," he says, because he doesn't want to alienate young people he's trying to reach. "But I will warn people about bad dope."

He says he sometimes enters a town and gives the residents evidence that they're on their way to hell. Statements like that get around, and people come to hear what he's got to say.

But sometimes his controversy arouses only anger.

"People either love me or hate me," he says, and Strack fully expects to be threatened before he leaves Fort Myers.

Strack's preaching isn't limited to churches.

"I was saved at one in the morning on a living room floor," he says, and his wife Diane found Christ at a Jethro Tull concert on the East Coast.

He goes to schools, and to places

where sinners meet.

If Strack is controversial on any subject, it's religion itself.

"America doesn't need any more religion," he says, adding that he thinks more persons will go to hell because of churches than because of Communism.

"America needs redemption, a Saviour."

All churches not preaching conservative, fundamental Gospel are declining, he says.

Satan has been working on the churches, according to Strack, and has them where he wants them — inactive.

"I am stressing don't settle for anything less than personal forgiveness, a personal saviour," he says.

"I present evidence that demands a verdict."

# Elvis Presley step brother at crusade

"A New Beginning" is the title of a small brochure being distributed this week by **Jay Strack**, author-evangelist who is the guest speaker at the Marion County Crusade for Christ at Gardner Stadium at 7 p.m. nightly.

And that's the theme **Strack** is using as he talks to groups of students at all the local schools, encouraging, inspiring and challenging them to "A New Beginning."

**Jay Strack** was born into an alcoholic home in Orlando, Fla., and as a six-year-old boy experienced the heartache of a broken home. His alcoholic father deserted the family, which included **Strack** and a brother.

Working two and three jobs, Mrs. **Strack** felt that she

couldn't properly care for both children, so she sent the brother to live with grandparents. **Strack** says that he grew up on his own from the time he was six.

"If it feels good, do it," became his philosophy, and as a teen, parties and the streets became a way of life for him as he tried to fill an empty void in his life. At the age of 14, the drug scene entered his undisciplined life.

Beginning with smoking pot, he soon graduated to harder drugs, and after being arrested several times was placed in a juvenile detention home.

A classmate began witnessing to him, and after a series of battles with himself "gave his life to the Savior" at age 17. At the age of 19 he

pastored his first church, baptizing 133 people.

Since then he has written books and has spent his full time in evangelism.

Joining him in the crusade are Rick, Randy and Rodney Stone, as well as R.O. and Angie Stone.

Tonight (Thursday) Rick Stanley, step brother of the late Elvis Presley, will appear at the crusade. Stanley gives his testimony, including that he used heroin for five years and was arrested several times. A 15 year-old girl friend helped convert him, and he has spent the past 16 months in evangelism.

The crusade is sponsored by the Marion County Baptist **Association**, but everyone is invited.

[https://www.thenewsenterprise.com/news/local/university-founder-presented-legacy-in-evangelism-award/article\\_91e2](https://www.thenewsenterprise.com/news/local/university-founder-presented-legacy-in-evangelism-award/article_91e2)

University founder presented Legacy in Evangelism Award

By CHIP HUTCHESON KENTUCKY TODAY Mar 12, 2024 0

Jay Strack, founder of Student Leadership University, whose mission statement is, “Equipping the students of today to be the Christian leaders of tomorrow,” was presented the Legacy in Evangelism award by the Kentucky Baptist Convention.

Strack, an Orlando, Florida, resident, accepted the award Tuesday morning at the REACH Evangelism and Missions Conference held at Severns Valley Baptist Church.

Tommy Tapscott, associational mission strategist for the Laurel River Baptist Association, made the presentation and spoke of Strack’s influence on his life.

He recalled attending a youth evangelism conference 30 years ago in Frankfort where Strack was the guest speaker. Tapscott said God used Strack to impact him to be called into ministry. “This is a gospel gratitude moment of thanks to Jay Strack — I am thankful for your impact on me and upon thousands and thousands of people you have mentored and have invested in.”

In accepting the award, Strack said it is “very humbling — I am blown away.”

Each year KBC presents the award at REACH to recognize someone who has made a lifetime evangelistic impact throughout the nation and world.

Strack has made presentations at more than 10,000 high schools and 145 universities worldwide, coupled with the training of some 46,000 students in leadership and life skills.

He is author of several highly inspirational books, including “Everything Worth Knowing I Learned Growing Up in Florida” and “The Three Success Secrets of Shamgar.” He inspired NASA’s Marshall Space Center with such presentations such as “It Takes a Team to Launch a Dream.”

Rob Patterson, Evangelism team leader for the KBC, said Strack is “highly acclaimed by leadership in government entities, the business world and educators as a dynamic and inspirational communicator.”

Strack has made presentations in facilities such as the Astrodome, Georgia Dome and TWA Dome. He has been a lecturer at the Air Force Academy, the Politburo in Moscow and the Knesset in Israel.

His clients include professional sports teams and corporate entities such as NASA, Walmart, Chick-fil-A, Johnson & Johnson, General Motors, Pfizer Pharmaceutical, Walt Disney Company, Universal Studios and Suntrust Bank.

<https://www.sbcevangelist.org/jay-strack/>  
Jay-Strack

Hall of Faith Class of 2008

## FLORIDA

Highly acclaimed as a dynamic preacher, Jay Strack has spoken to an estimated 15 million people in his 35 years of ministry in thousands of churches, over 10,000 high schools and hundreds of area-wide, inter-denominational and inter-racial crusades. He has spoken before government entities, corporate groups, and numerous professional sports teams in the NFL, NBA, and MLB and more than 100 universities. Dr. Jay Strack has shared Christ through his message to both Air Force Academy students and faculty, and was the featured speaker for the 1998 NBA All-Star Chapel.

Dr. Jay Strack is an effective communicator, author and minister from Orlando, Florida. He has devoted his life to helping people become winners. Having overcome his own drug addiction as an adolescent, he believes, "If I can overcome, anyone can overcome." Acclaimed as a dynamic speaker by leaders in the business and educational sectors, as well as the religious arena, Dr. Strack has spoken to an estimated 15 million people in his three decades of ministry.

In the early 1970s, Jay Strack wondered where his life was going. He came from a home racked by divorce several times over, and had been emotionally, physically and sexually abused. He was into drugs and alcohol. Charleston Southern University took a chance on Jay Strack giving him a semester to prove himself. Less than three years later, he had earned degrees in religion and psychology. "I went from totally unmotivated to a doctorate degree," he says. "From getting stoned and thinking school is a waste of time to being radically committed to it. Now, I have degrees on every wall of my office."

Challenged by the knowledge that many young people lack the skills necessary for strong leadership development, Strack created a program called the Student Leadership University. It is targeted to middle and high school students to help develop their leadership skills.

Dr. Strack is the author of more than 15 books including *Good Kids Who Do Bad Things: How to Help Your Kids Make Good Choices*.

<https://slulead.com/staff/dr-jay-strack/>

Leadership in government, business, and education entities proclaim Dr. Jay Strack to be a dynamic communicator. He is the author of several highly acclaimed books, including *The Power of One*. Jay believes, “Trust is built through genuine, intentional relationships and open dialogue across nations, cultures, and beliefs. Only then are hearts and situations changed. With every breath, my soul prays for peace in our country and across the globe.”

As Founder and creator of Student Leadership University and the Strack Center Global at his alma mater, Charleston Southern University, Jay has successfully merged the classroom with behind the scenes “edu-tainment” experiences across America, in England, Israel, Egypt, Jordan, West Bank, Italy, Greece, Turkey, Sudan, Spain, China and Africa, thus providing a customized environment for learning.

Dr. Strack is a Senior Fellow at Liberty University, designing global programs to connect American students with Middle East students through dialogue, study, and relational interactions both online and in person.

More than 30 years as a volunteer speaker in high schools and universities has given him a unique understanding and perspective to inspire students. Strack speaks to students in the same way he presents to major corporations and professional sports teams, believing that if given the right tools, students can soar into future-tense thinking and influence as leaders. Having prevailed over drug addiction and an abusive childhood, Jay believes, “If I can overcome the past and believe in the future, anyone can. Dreams can determine your destiny.”



<https://www.charlestonsouthern.edu/academics/centers-and-institutes/strack-center/>  
Student Leadership University

In 2020, Charleston Southern and Dr. Jay Strack '75 launched an initiative that marries SLU's mission with CSU's faith-based academics—the Center for Global Leadership and Ministry.

After graduating from CSU, Dr. Strack founded Student Leadership University, whose mission is to prepare the next generation to think, dream and lead through a challenging series of leadership training processes that equip students to have a renaissance mind, the heart of a patriot, the soul of a saint, the discipline of a champion and the influence of a leader. They accomplish this through leadership adventures developed to provide students with primary source experiences and access and exposure to world class thought leaders.