

December 2003

Contact



FAITH TRAVELING

No one expected the magi
in Bethlehem. They came far
and brought their faith with them.

Christmas Was All Wrong!

The first Christmas 2,000 years ago got off to
a rocky start. Nothing seemed to go right . . .

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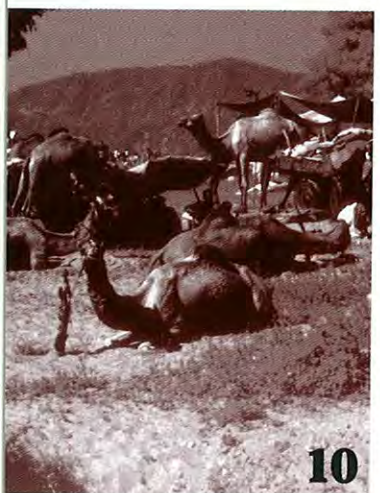
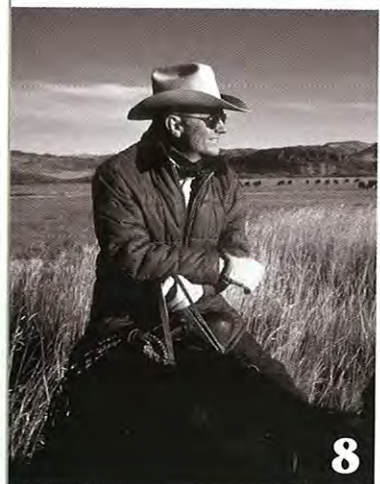
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Keith Burden

Some Assembly Required

It was one of the items on her

Christmas wish list. Our teenage daughter was very clear about what she wanted—a mirrored vanity for her bedroom. We looked through various sales papers and catalogs trying to find one that fit the description. We found one that filled the bill at a furniture superstore. To make matters even better, it was on sale!

I made the 90-mile drive checkbook in hand several days before Christmas. A courteous, helpful salesman met me at the door. I produced a picture of the advertised special and followed him up the escalator through a maze of showroom displays.

Mission Accomplished

The floor model looked better than the picture in the sales paper with its brass-plated metal frame supporting glass shelves and an oval mirror. The sturdy chair included a white vinyl seat. I breathed a sigh of relief when the clerk told me he had several in stock.

With a great sense of accomplishment, I went to the business office to pay for my purchase. The cashier handed me a receipt with instructions to pick up my package at the loading dock. In a matter of minutes a warehouse worker emerged from the stockroom carrying a cardboard box. He double-checked the model number, asked me to sign the sales slip to acknowledge delivery and proceeded to load the vanity in the trunk of my car.

Good Idea Gone Bad

Not wanting to run the risk of spoiling our Christmas surprise, I decided to wait until Christmas Eve to assemble the vanity. My idea made perfect sense at the time. The print on the side of the box said, "Some assembly required." I was confident I had the necessary tools and skills to assemble a simple piece of furniture.

Once we were certain our daughter was asleep, I placed the cardboard box in the middle of the family room floor. Carefully removing each piece from the carton, I proceeded to read the packing list. I inventoried the individual parts and compared them with the illustration on the assembly instruction sheet. I accounted for everything... everything except a small plastic bag that contained several nuts and bolts.

Trying not to panic, I checked the box to make sure I had not overlooked the package. It was nowhere to be found. Apparently the manufacturer failed to include it at the factory. It is hard to describe the sick feeling I experienced as reality began to set in.

What Do I Do Now?

I immediately began weighing my options. Going to the local hardware store was not one of them. Midnight on Christmas Eve isn't a good time to go looking for nuts and bolts. Calling a friend or neighbor for assistance wasn't an option either. Anyone with a lick of sense was already in bed.

My final recourse was a long shot at best, but it was the only other solution that came to mind. I went to the workbench in the garage and began pilfering

through my toolbox and coffee cans filled with miscellaneous screws, nails, nuts and bolts of various sizes and shapes. Incredibly, I managed to collect the required number of nuts and bolts. However, they varied in length and did not match the shiny brass frame of the vanity.

After two hours of frustration, the odd-looking Christmas gift was finally assembled. We attached a bow to the vanity and left it next to the Christmas tree. Our daughter showed few signs of disappointment the next morning, especially after I explained what happened. Since that near disaster I've learned a few things about giving a gift that requires "some assembly."

Avoid the Christmas Rush

First, take nothing for granted. Even though the label on a box may say it contains certain items, it's always a good idea to check the contents before Christmas Eve. Follow the advice of the Boy Scouts—*be prepared*.

Second, don't place unrealistic expectations on yourself. Nothing is ever as simple or easy as it seems. If you think you can assemble a vanity in 15 minutes, you probably ought to allow two hours.

By the way—these two principles have an even broader application at Christmastime. As you celebrate our Savior's birth this year, don't take anything for granted. Enjoy and be genuinely grateful for the people and blessings God has brought into your life. You never know... they may not be around next December.

Furthermore, don't go into the holidays with unrealistic expectations. Plan to give more than you receive... a whole lot more. If you do, you may rediscover the truth of Jesus' words in Acts 20:35—"It is more blessed to give than to receive." ■





The last place on earth to look for a king was Bethlehem.

Christmas Was All

For some occasions everything has to be just right. When a fellow plans to pop the question to his sweetheart, he carefully selects the time and place. When doctors go

to operate, they make sure the OR is spick-and-span. Heads of state roll out the red carpet when holding summits. Some events you don't just let happen.

A bit over 2,000 years ago the creator God of the universe transplanted His Son from the realms of eternal glory into time and space. One would expect such an event to call for careful planning. Every "i" must be dotted and every "t" crossed. Yet, much that surrounds the first Christmas seems out of place and inappropriate for such a grand occasion. Let me explain.

The City

Bethlehem, about five miles south of Jerusalem, served as Jesus' native city. Today the place might catch one's eye as possessing special significance. For centuries the curious and the devoted have flocked there to the fourth-century Church of the Holy Nativity. They enter to gaze upon the place where tradition says Jesus took His first breath.

What these tourists see reeks of prestige and opulence. Beautiful tapestries and paintings decorate the walls. Fifteen lanterns representing different religious groups illuminate the scene. Approaching the very birthplace, the marble floor reveals a silver star with a Latin inscription: *Hic de Virgine Maria Jesus Christus natus est* ("Here of the Virgin Mary Jesus Christ was born").¹

When Jesus was born, however, Bethlehem was different. The prophecy referred to the city as small among the clans of Judah (Micah 5:2). It must have stayed that way, for in their digging there, archaeologists haven't even found city walls.² Apparently, there wasn't much to protect. We are accurate when we sing "O Little Town of Bethlehem." This seems wrong. A bustling metropolis, a world center,



Wrong! Or Was It?

By Paul V. Harrison

Humility was writ large across that first Christmas scene.

such a place as this should be the King's birthplace, not Bethlehem.

The Manger

In this humble town, where would you expect this most famous One to find His resting place? Luke says He lay first in a manger, a feeding trough for sheep and the like. The setting seems to have been a stable, "because there was no room for them in the inn" (Luke 2:7).

divine wisdom surrounding this unique birth. For you see, alongside the seemingly "wrong" things were hints of splendor.

Heaven pushed a brilliant star to center stage. Humanity brought wise men with precious gifts. A host of angels provided music. And if that's not enough, the woman giving birth was a virgin. The truth is that the timing was just right. It was the "fullness of time" (Galatians 4:4). The place and the people were right. Jesus was to be "despised and rejected of men" (Isaiah 53:3).

If obscurity was what you were looking for, ancient Bethlehem in the middle of the night pretty much provided it.

Humility was writ large across that first Christmas scene. As G. Campbell Morgan said: Jesus "was born into this world so low down that no baby can ever be born lower."³ This too seems wrong.

When we broaden our scope and look at the whole Jewish landscape, we only find more smallness. Only about the size of New Jersey, the Holy Land, as we call it, then moaned under Roman domination.

The People

Even the Jewish people, into whose race the Savior was born, seemed like the wrong choice. Historian Everett Ferguson noted: "Most cultivated Greeks and Romans expressed a negative attitude toward Jews."⁴ Tacitus, Roman historian of the first century, said the Jews observed the Sabbath because they were lazy.

These people could also reveal gross selfishness. They weren't looking for one to deliver them from sin. Rather, they panted after a warrior-king to overcome their earthly enemies and install them as rulers of the land.

The Timing

The timing of Jesus' birth and life also seems odd. Few comforts were available. Superstition was rampant. There was no CNN or printing presses to get out the word. If obscurity was what you were looking for, ancient Bethlehem in the middle of the night pretty much provided it.

Even the Jews, who had prophecies pointing toward this coming, by-and-large missed them. They desired a warrior-king. God offered a baby. In the end the only audience secured for the world's greatest birth was a crew of a few smelly shepherds.

The Purpose

Yes, so much of the Christmas story seems wrong. But was it really? In reality, God wrapped His special gift in the perfect package of history. It's beautiful to behold the

You see, there was a need for the lowly place and the humble people in the first Christmas. The birth of the one-and-only Son of God and Son of Man called for both smallness and greatness.

The best sermon I've ever read is "The Excellency of Christ" by Jonathan Edwards. In it he set out to show that "there is an admirable conjunction of diverse excellencies in Jesus Christ." He says: "There do meet in Jesus Christ infinite highness and infinite condescension." In him meet "infinite justice and infinite grace," "infinite glory and lowest humility," "infinite majesty and transcendent meekness."⁵

Edwards's text was Revelation 5:5-6. John hears the elders say: "Behold the Lion of the tribe of Judah," and when he turns to look, the apostle records: "Then I saw a Lamb." Jesus, the Lion and the Lamb! The almighty God and the finite man. The ruler of the universe and the baby in a manger.

Don't tell me Christmas was all wrong. Rather, walk with me to the little town of Bethlehem and let us together worship the lowly babe who was at the same time the exalted King. ■



About the Writer: Dr. Paul Harrison pastors Cross Timbers Free Will Baptist Church in Nashville, Tennessee. He is a member of the Commission for Theological Integrity.

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2. *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, s.v. "Bethlehem," by Henri Cazelles.
3. G. Campbell Morgan, *The Gospel According to Luke* (Westwood, N.J.: Fleming H. Revell, 1931), 36.
4. Everett Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*, 2d ed. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1993), 404.
5. Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, Hickman ed., 2 vols. (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1990), 680-81.

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A closer look at why some people end with a flourish while others stumble.

While traveling from Arkansas to Tennessee some weeks ago, Mrs. Scott and I stopped for a time of rest and relaxation at a Paducah shopping mall. Strolling leisurely down one wing of the mall, I could not help overhearing the conversation of two fellows sitting on one of the benches.

The first said, "He won't be missed." The second responded, "No, he sure won't be missed. Not a bit."

I've wished since that I had stopped and asked a few questions. If the men were giving an accurate account of the departed's record, what kind of person must he have been? Having passed up my opportunity to interrogate the two locals, I'm left to ponder why the fellow in the discussion won't be missed. What did he do or not do to deserve that blunt assessment?

Some Do, Some Don't

When it comes to finishing well, the truth is some do, some don't. Another element of that truth is, we will ulti-

mately be weighed in the even balances of God's scales—not the unreliable, sometimes prejudiced balances of men.

When invited to write about this subject, my first thoughts turned toward preachers and others with positions in the church—people like teachers, musicians, board members, administrators and other workers. That's more than likely the direction your thoughts ran, too. However, to finish well should be the desire of us all, regardless of our calling, profession or position.

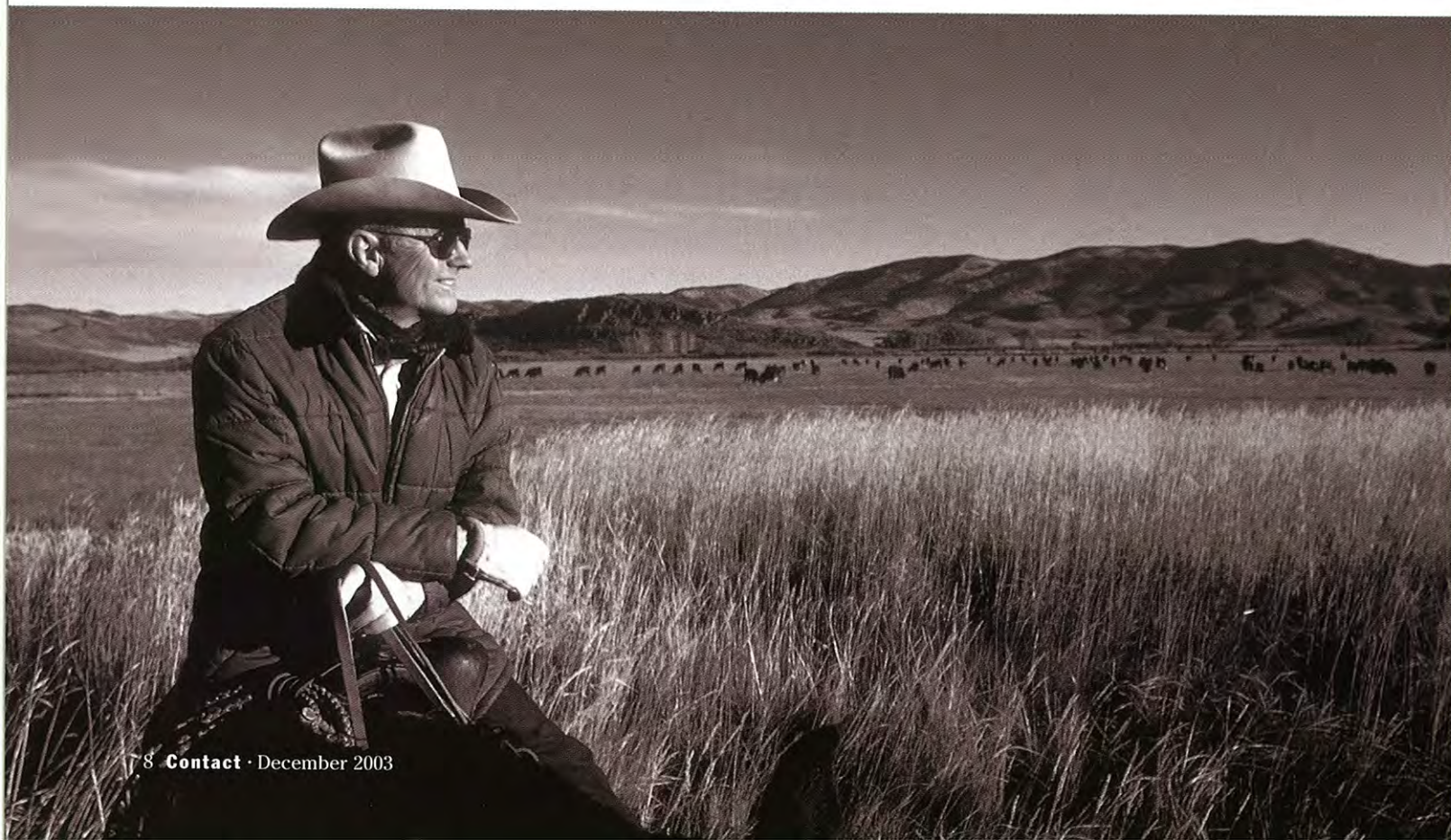
These Did

Lorena B. Edwards is associate professor of management and business administration at Belmont University.

Besides being active in her church, she's been in the field of education 44 years as a counselor and classroom instructor. Approaching retirement, she said, "I want my last semester to be the best of all."

The Apostle Paul desired to finish with a flourish. "That I may finish my course with joy." That battle-scarred, road-weary servant of Christ was not being egotistical as he reviewed the race, recalled the conflicts and declared of himself, "I have fought a good fight..." When it was all over for Paul, none of the chatter club ever sat on a park bench and muttered, "He won't be missed. Not a bit."

Finishing well. That's an honorable ambition, an attainable goal. If we finish



Finishing Well

By Ben Scott

well, we're in good company. If we fail to finish well, we'll be reckoned with a long list of those who came up short.

These Did Not

King Solomon didn't finish well. His downfall, women. Lots of women. "For it came to pass, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods" (1 Kings 11:4).

Demas didn't finish well. The "world" got him. The last commentary on this dropout, "For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world" (II Tim. 4:10).

The industrious but foolish farmer in Luke 12 sure didn't finish well. His downfall was wealth. Things. Bigger barns. The reality is that he never had wealth at all. Wealth had him. The lust for other things clutched his soul like the jaws of a steel trap clutch the leg of a trapped animal.

Each of us can compile our own lists of the winners and the losers. The Bible supplies a lengthy list of both. So does our own roster of acquaintances. Some make the honor roll. Some flunk the course.

Blueprint for Success

How can one finish well? Be he preacher, layman or whatever, certain character traits are peculiar to the group that finishes well. One of these traits is *selflessness*. That's an unselfish spirit.

Remember that anonymous verse, "Old man, going a lone highway, who came at the evening cold and gray, to a chasm; vast and deep and wide, through which was flowing a sullen tide?"

The reason that nameless traveler imprints our minds and lives on in our memories, is that he was a bridge builder. Recognizing that his race was nearly run, he paused in the twilight to do something for the rising generation. Those coming after him would find the road a little smoother because he had

removed a few stones, repaired a few potholes and built a bridge.

King David fits in that category. Despite the blemishes on his life which are so hard for us to forget, he spent his final days preparing and paving the way for his successor. He was not permitted to complete the elaborate building program. However, he accumulated and left substance in the treasury for the one coming after him.

Of his successor, David said, "Solomon my son is young and tender, and the house that is to be built for the Lord must be exceeding magnificent, of fame and of glory throughout all countries: I will therefore now make preparation for it. So David prepared abundantly before his death" (I Chron. 22:5).

Not only did he leave wealth in the building fund, he left his prayers and sincere good wishes for the one following him.

Your Turn

It's a wise person who knows when to get out of the saddle, turn loose of the reins and give his support to the new rider. Sure, he looks young, and he is inexperienced. He's not yet been over the long, winding trail. It's more than likely he'll do some things differently. He might even make a few mistakes.

But he's the one now who's pastoring the church, directing the college, filling positions on the boards and managing the administrative office. As surely as

night follows day or day follows night, the younger fresh generation follows the old.

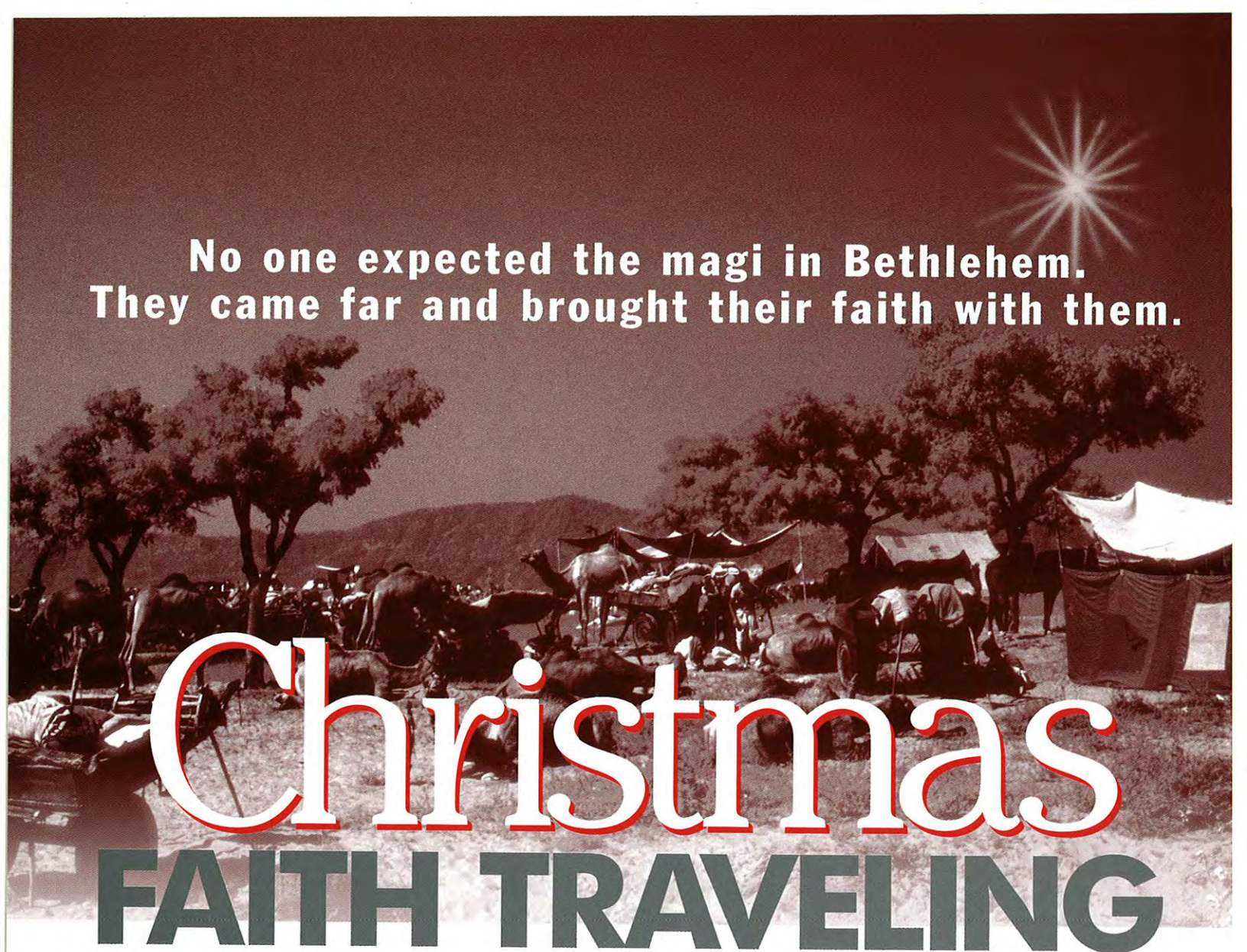
If we have been faithful to our Lord and done something, anything to help the rising generation, we will finish well. If we can look back and see a life of service well rendered, worthy ambitions well pursued, righteous battles well engaged ... relinquish the reins without regret. Dismount with dignity. Get out of the saddle with grace.

Be at peace with God and men. Spend your last days contentedly. Work as your health and opportunity permit. Watch and wait for "that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." If He commends you with His well done, you will have finished well! ■



About the Writer:

Reverend Ben Scott is a retired Free Will Baptist minister who has been preaching 59 years. He continues to do pulpit supply from his home in Pocahontas, Arkansas. Reverend Scott began pastoring in 1945, served on the Free Will Baptist Bible College Board of Trustees and as moderator of the Arkansas State Association.



**No one expected the magi in Bethlehem.
They came far and brought their faith with them.**

Christmas

FAITH TRAVELING

By Grant Swank

The magi asked, “Where is the king of the Jews?” They were traveling—by faith. Persian astrologers, they were. And Gentiles at that. Somewhere along the way they had come to study the Jewish scripture scrolls, then acknowledge the Hebrew deity as the true God.

In their studies, they converged their astrological vocation with scriptural research—studying the heavens for the throne of God. In that, God spoke to them of the approaching birth of the Hebrew Messiah Christ. God informed them that if they as Gentiles followed the unique star, they would see for themselves the Jewish Anointed One.

Therefore, these fellows acted out their faith. They traveled with their faith in hand and heart. Over the hot sands, to the west, in search of a baby they had never laid eyes on. It was by simple faith that they made their trek.

So it is in your life and mine. We have never laid eyes on Jesus Christ nor seen His resurrected body nor gone to Heaven to witness Him as intercessor at the right hand of the Father. But we have researched the scriptures and believe their account to be true. Therefore, from time to time this invisible deity displays Himself in our visible experiences. We, by faith, then come upon the marvelous sight.

Angry Herods

Yet in this faith traveling, there are numerous Herods who would stand in the way, attempting to wreck the faith

project. They are bloodthirsty, agents of Hell, mean to the pits. Such should never surprise the faith child. Jesus promised as much. That is why He told His own to be as wise as snakes and harmless as doves. Wise as snakes!

How interesting that every time Heaven breaks through with some marvelous holy extravaganza of love and mercy, Hell gets as angry as angry can be. So it is that while God implanted Himself into human history, Herod became furious with envy. He stalked. He balked. He strung out his nerves to dry.

Then Herod put on the religious face. What a mask he wore. It was with such religious enthusiasm that he approached the magi to inform them that he too wanted to worship the new Hebrew King. If they would only tell

by faith alone. Yet in the dark of night, they would again catch the gleam.

So it is with our faith journeys. We come into night seasons of confusion and doubt, trouble and depression. Can we go another step? Who would care?

see. We come upon Heaven's own reward—sight!

It was then with such utter ecstasy that these grown men bent their knees before the Child. They flung their gold, frankincense and myrrh—gushing forth

As we keep true to the journey, the star appears again in the darkest night. Then we know anew that God has not left us; He is still where He has always been—faithful to those children on the trek.

him of the infant's whereabouts, Herod himself would bow before this tiny item.

Outrageous Counterfeits

So it was that Herod continued his hypocritical dance of envy by contacting chief priests and teachers of law. He asked the details of their prophetic records. Where? When? How?

In our faith journeys we come upon the outrageous counterfeits. How they wear their masks tightly. They know the language, the imagery and the posture. They know the concepts and doctrines. They put on the display of piety. But their hearts are far from God. Again, Jesus warns His genuine grace children to be wary of the snakes.

How sad that the chief priests and teachers of the law could inform Herod of the prophetic piece and yet be so utterly far from its personal truth. It would be these very religious play actors who would some day plot the murder of the infant-grown-adult. So near, so far. How often has that duo played itself out for the ruin of those on stage.

It is then with the gift of discernment that God provides the sincere grace child with the spiritual perception to see through the mask. This spiritual present enables the true believer to continue the faith journey without being detoured by those who would distract to destroy.

Hope in the Night

So it was that the magi made the trip—following the star. Yet how did they discern in the broad daylight? It was then that they simply trudged forward

Who will lead us? The nighttime clouds cover the star shine. We cannot see it. Have we lost it completely?

No. As we keep true to the journey, the star appears again in the darkest night. Then we know anew that God has not left us; He is still where He has always been—faithful to those children on the trek.

Eventually the magi reached Bethlehem. The Jewish shepherds had preceded them in the cave stall. But now the Gentile astrologers would come upon the Hebrew Christ in a house. No wonder Jesus later told His own that He came to the Jew first and then the Gentile. So it had been since Bethlehem's start. Yet it was for all mankind—"For God who loved the world"—that the Messiah Babe laid in the manger. It was for all that He would die upon the tree.

Reality in a Trough

The Christmas account then happily relates that the magi's hearts were overjoyed with their sight discovery. Their faith had led them to the visible God in the cow's trough. There He was, for certain!

What if they had given up? What if they had doubted and turned back? What if they had counted the cost and concluded it was fool-hearty? Then they would not have seen. Their faith would have crumbled. They would have paid with the loss of their very destinies.

But they did not renege. They remained true to the close. Their faith yielded its own reward—sight!

And so it is with each of us—we make the journey to the close, then we

with praise and worship. They were beside themselves, no doubt tears streaming down their cheeks. The hot sands were behind them. The Babe was before them. They had stayed true to the vision; God had remained true to His promise.

So it is with you and me. We find out that as we make the faith journey, there are days when we wonder what is going on. Can we make it to the close? Will it prove us the utter fools? Yet we proceed. And when we do, we realize one certainty. God never left the very spot where He promised to meet us. God has been there all along.

Beyond IF

If the magi had turned back somewhere along the westward trail, Jesus would still have been waiting in the Bethlehem cow stall. But they would have missed Him—totally.

If we had turned back, God would still be very much there. If we had forsaken the promise, the journey, the prize, God would still be very much there. God remains, though others falter.

Thank Heaven the magi remained constant and so came upon The Constant. No wonder their hearts were pounding for joy abounding! And so it is the same with us, as we remain loyal to the faith, to the close of the journey. ■



About the Writer:
Reverend Grant Swank is a free-lance writer and pastor who lives in Windham, Maine.

Don Robirds, *Heartbeat* Editor, Retires

ANTIOCH, TN—Reverend Don Robirds, 68-year-old California native, closes nearly four decades with the Foreign Missions Department when he retires December 31. After spending seven years in Brazil as a missionary, Robirds served 31 years as *Heartbeat* editor and director of publications with the Foreign Missions Department.

Robirds received a standing ovation at the Free Will Baptist national convention which met in Tampa, Florida, this past July. Foreign Missions general director James Forlines presented him a gemstone world globe in appreciation for his years of service.

Don graduated from Modesto High School in 1954 and studied journalism and graphic arts two years at Modesto Junior College before moving to Tennessee where he completed a bachelor of arts degree at Free Will Baptist Bible College in 1961.

He returned to California where he taught at California Bible Institute (now California Christian College) 1961–1964. During that time he also pastored Richmond FWB Church and Pinole FWB Church.

Don and Carol Robirds were appointed to missionary service in Brazil and departed for the field in December 1964. Don served as a general and literature missionary and later began a ministry to reach Brazilian doctors and lawyers.

The Robirds returned to the United States in late 1971 when Don became director of communications for Foreign Missions. He edited *Heartbeat* and did the layout in addition to producing all Foreign Missions publications and audiovisual materials.

Robirds said, "It was difficult for me to leave Brazil in 1971. But after Brother J. Reford Wilson convinced me to pray about the matter, I agreed. We moved to Nashville thinking the Lord would send us back to Brazil at a later date. That time never came..."

Don designed and developed displays for the National Association and contributed to the overall administration of the Foreign Missions Department. He launched the *Embracing Vision* video series to help mobilize Free Will Baptists toward world outreach. Part of this series has gone to over 700 churches.

Robirds served with four Foreign Missions directors—J. Reford Wilson,



Rolla Smith, R. Eugene Waddell and James Forlines.

He said, "If I had my life to live over, I would hope to do even more in the service of the King." He praised the dedicated Foreign Missions staff and missionaries.

After his retirement, Robirds plans to spend time with his wife, Carol. He also plans to do free-lance work for the Foreign Missions Department.

Bible College Receives \$115,000 from Family

NASHVILLE, TN—Free Will Baptist Bible College received \$115,250 from the Jeanette Riley Trust. The gift came to the college in response to the wishes of Mrs. Riley, who died March 14, 2003, in Olathe, Kansas. Her husband, Orlie, died in September 1998.

Mr. and Mrs. Riley retired to Florida in 1972 from Canton, Illinois, where Mr. Riley owned and managed a tire business. They learned of the college from Rev. Larry Montgomery, then pastor of Hollywood FWB Church, Hollywood, Florida, where they attended. Rev. Montgomery, a former trustee of the college, said, "The Rileys were friends to every pastor. They especially appreciated the training that I and Rev. John Gilliland, who pre-

ceded me at the Hollywood church, received at Free Will Baptist Bible College."

Mr. Phil Riley, trustee of the trust and Mrs. Riley's nephew, said, "They loved the Lord and their church and were interested in assisting young men and women to prepare for Christian service."

FWBBC President Matthew Pinson said, "This generous gift from the estate of Mrs. Riley is a testimony to her love for God and Free Will Baptist Bible College. In leaving the college in her will, Mrs. Riley's investment in the lives of students will continue even now that she has gone home to be with the Lord."

Arkansas Church Celebrates 50 Years

JONESBORO, AR—First FWB Church in Jonesboro celebrated 50th anniversary activities on September 7. Pastor Tim Morgan delivered the morning sermon and recognized charter members Marie Branham and John Thomas.

Former pastors John Small, Ben Scott and W.H. Bostic participated in the celebration. Each former pastor brought greetings and spoke of their memories at the church. They encouraged members to “be thankful for what God has done in the past, then move on.”

After a noon meal at the church, members and guests gathered for an afternoon of vocal and instrumental music. Bookmarks commemorating the jubilee

celebration were distributed to everyone.

The church organized in a log service station with nine members on September 6, 1953. Founding pastor Will S. White led that service. Three years later in 1956, the congregation built on the corner of Monroe and Puryear Streets. They later erected a sanctuary in 1968 and an educational building in 1978.

Steady growth resulted in the purchase of a 12-acre site on which to relocate and build. The church moved into a new sanctuary, family life center and classrooms on South Stadium Boulevard in September 2002.

Members Edward and Joyce Holder compiled a 56-page book for the anniversary event that includes 200 photographs. The book, *The First 50 Years of First Free Will Baptist Church*, can be purchased for \$11.50 (includes postage). Send requests to: Letha Brown, 900 Sycamore Cove, Jonesboro, AR 72404.



The New Church Building.

Illinois Church Relives ‘Tent’ Beginning



Former pastor Wallace Malone.



Pastor Tyler Penn.

DECATUR, IL—The 40th anniversary celebration at First FWB Church included a tent meeting, a minister who delivered the same sermon he preached 40 years earlier and gift copies of a 42-page church history.

The July 27 festivities brought members together for preaching, singing, dinner and public testimonies under

the big top set up adjacent to the church.

H. D. Cockrum, long-time member and editor of the church history book, said the sign in front of the tent “was the original built and painted 40 years ago.”

Cockrum continued, “The tent was overflowing with people. Many of our younger generation had never sat in



The Tent Meeting.

such a service. The Spirit of the Lord was there as in old times.”

Guest speaker Wallace Malone who pastored the church twice, (1961–1969, 1979–1988) preached the same sermon he delivered in 1963 when the small congregation relocated and kicked off the event with a tent revival. The church began in 1961, outgrew their meeting space and purchased land on which to expand in 1963. They moved into their new building in 1965.

Pastor Tyler Penn now leads the 150-member congregation

that began with 14 charter members. The church has gone through several building programs (1968, 1973), seen numerous members called into full-time Christian service, and adapted with the times in order to reach the Decatur community.

The church became the first Free Will Baptist congregation in Illinois to launch a radio ministry (1971). In the past decade the church purchased a 15-passenger van and two buses, began mailing monthly newsletters and did major property renovations.

Tennessee Church Dedicates Building



Members and guests at dedication service.

COOKEVILLE, TN—Twenty-one months after Reverend Roger Cooper said he had a dream to build a church on Highway 111 near Cookeville, the dream became reality on Sunday afternoon, September 14.

Some 150 people gathered for the 90-minute dedication service at the 111 Fellowship FWB Church. The 6,000-

square-foot metal structure with seating for 250 people opened its doors for the first-ever service.

Pastor Roger Cooper welcomed members and guests, and presided during the energetic worship session. Veteran Free Will Baptist minister Raymond Riggs prayed the opening prayer. *Contact* editor Jack Williams led the formal dedication.

The church gave numerous plaques to individuals and local companies who shared in the planning stages of the new work.

Reverend Charles Cooper (Pastor Roger Cooper's father) said the cost to purchase 5.5 acres on which to build,

plus actual construction expenses were about \$250,000. In addition to the sanctuary, the building includes a pastor's study, nursery, kitchen and five upstairs classrooms.

Pastor Roger Cooper preached the dedication message from Genesis 1:1-4. He spoke of God's original creation and the subsequent new creation when men are saved from sin. He cited the need for members to be available for God's Spirit to use, and the authority of God's Word in guiding the church and the individual.

Attendance at the 111 Fellowship is in the 50s. The church is a member of Tennessee's Liberty Association.

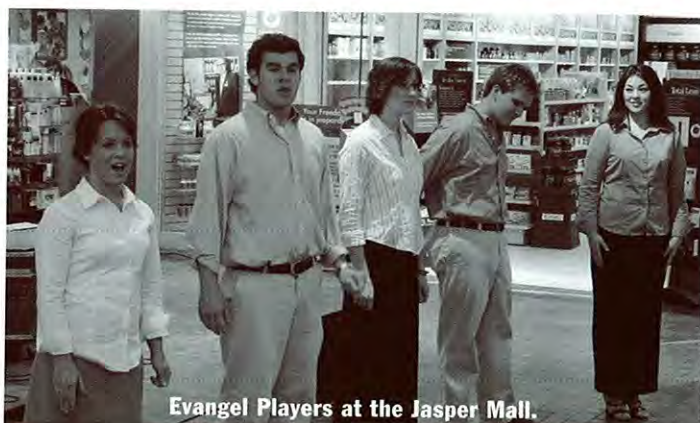
2004 Yearbooks Coming

NASHVILLE, TN—The 2004 *Free Will Baptist Yearbook* will be off the press in late January. The yearbooks will be mailed to district association

clerks for distribution to local pastors.

If you want to purchase a copy for personal use, call Randall House Publications at 800/877-7030.

200 Attend Alabama Youthfest



Evangel Players at the Jasper Mall.



Fellowship at Youthfest '03.

JASPER, AL—In a first of its kind effort, Free Will Baptists in Walker County, Alabama, came together September 6 to sponsor Youthfest '03, according to event coordinator Jimmy Aldridge.

More than 200 youth and adults gathered at Sherer Auditorium in Jasper for a Saturday of drama, music and preaching. Area Free Will Baptists had prayed for months as Youthfest '03 moved from the idea stage to reality.

Evangel Players and New Mercy (drama and singing groups from Free Will Baptist Bible College) arrived from Tennessee to spearhead an attractive program. New Mercy gave a concert in the Jasper Mall preceding the 7:00 p.m. service at Sherer Auditorium.

Guest speaker Aaron Dawson (Cullman, AL) opened the evening session. Dawson was followed by a stirring musical performance from New Mercy and a drama by the Evangel Players.

Coordinator Jimmy Aldridge said, "Many young people responded to Evangelist Dawson's invitation to choose Jesus."

Three pastors were so impressed with the drama-music-preaching that they led their churches to change worship hours Sunday in order to conduct a repeat service in western Walker County Sunday afternoon.

Reverend Aldridge said, "We are working on plans for Youthfest '04."

Appalachian Christian School Opens

DUFFIELD, VA—Thirty students enrolled August 18 for the first academic year at Appalachian Christian School in Duffield, according to Martha Stone, advancement director for Harvest Child Care Ministries, the sponsoring agency.

Newl Dotson, executive director at Harvest, introduced the school's academic administrator, Dr. Leland Salyers, to parents, teachers and students at a continental breakfast.

Principal Ron Gordon leads the five-teacher faculty. The school uses Bob Jones University curriculum. Classes are open to students from the community as well as from Harvest Child Care Ministries.

Advancement director Martha Stone said, "We are excited to offer good Christian education to children in our area."

Appalachian Christian School (ACS) is a member of the Association of Christian Schools International and is on the Tennessee State Department Education list as an approved school. ACS provides students an opportunity to attend school in a safe and nurturing environment.



First students enroll at Appalachian Christian School.

Missouri Steering Committee Meets

KANSAS CITY, MO—The Missouri Steering Committee met Friday, September 26, in Kansas City for a five-hour orientation to expedite plans for hosting the 68th annual national convention July 18–22, 2004. Convention manager Dean Jones led the session.

Executive secretary Keith Burden blocked 1,068 rooms in downtown hotels to house delegates.

The convention brochure which

includes housing and pre-registration forms will be printed in the April and May 2004 issues of *Contact*. The forms will also be made available to state papers and posted on the National Association of Free Will Baptists' website.

The Missouri contingency includes the steering committee, state moderator, state WAC president and an NYC advisor.

Chairman
State Moderator

Nathan Ruble
Richard Robinson

Hospitality Committee Kenny Simpson
Prayer Committee Gene Howell
Ushering Committee Allen Kinder
MWAC President Shirley Jackson
NYC Advisor Mark Braisher

The Steering Committee met 8:00 a.m.–1:00 p.m. gathering information, reviewing committee assignments and discussing convention facilities. Committee members will meet twice in 2004 (January and May) to assess convention plans.

Bible College Freshmen Elect Officers



NASHVILLE, TN—Free Will Baptist Bible College's newest freshman class, in one of its first actions, elected officers to serve for the year. Jacob Riggs, a member of Good Springs FWB Church in Pleasant View, TN, was chosen president.

Serving with him are:

Vice-President—David Jones (Fenton, Missouri), member of Calvary Fellowship FWB Church.
Secretary-Treasurer—Susan Eastridge (Catlettsburg, Kentucky), member of Heritage Temple FWB Church.
Worship Leader—Matthew Price (Gastonia, North Carolina), member of First FWB Church.
Chaplain—Jamie Lane (Nebo, North Carolina), member of Rocky Pass FWB Church. ■

L–R: Jacob Riggs, president; David Jones, vice-president; Susan Eastridge, secretary-treasurer; Matthew Price, worship leader; Jamie Lane, chaplain.

Florida: Pastor **Steve Berry** and youth leader **Mike Taggart** led 15 youth and sponsors 1,800 miles from **First FWB Church** in **Melbourne** to direct a Bible school in Allende, Mexico. Pastor Berry preached his first sermon in Spanish. More than 100 attended the Bible school.



Up in smoke. That's what happened to the mortgage at **Soul's Harbor FWB Church** in **Pensacola**. Pastor **Danny Conn** and members set fire to the 10-year mortgage on their fellowship hall after the last payment was made. Retired pastor **R. C. Wiggins**, on hand to witness the event, received a certificate of appreciation for leading that building project.

Illinois: When members at **First FWB Church** in **Mt. Vernon** tell you that Pastor **Mike Gillock** can preach up a storm, they really mean it. Happened during a Sunday night sermon in August. The downpour damaged the roof and Sunday School rooms, and cancelled Vacation Bible School.

Pastor **Kenneth Edwards** reports eight conversions at **Harmony FWB Church** in **West Frankfort** during VBS activities with 80 youth attending each night.

Evangelist **Bobby Jackson** preached a six-night camp meeting for adults in **Illinois**, September 14-19. Jackson's evangelistic ministry spans 52 years, 1500 campaigns and over 15,000 sermons.

They do it differently at **Northwest FWB Church** in **Chicago**. Youth groups from four churches rolled into the city last summer to help distribute 24,000 flyers, conduct VBS for 80 children, set an attendance record of 106 and more.

Umm, they also held a free neighborhood car wash. They washed 200 cars, two motorcycles, two bicycles... and a tour bus. **David Potete** pastors the cleanest church in Chicago.

Mississippi: Pastor **Gary Elder** has baptized a lot of people over the years. One of his finest baptismal moments occurred June 15 when he baptized both his father and his mother. Gary pastors **Harvest FWB Church** in **Madison**.

Ohio: Members of **Unity FWB Church** in **Middleburg Heights** honored Pastor **Lester McMahan** for 25 years of leadership. The "Celebration of Service" weekend featured multi-media presentations, guest speakers and greetings from family members. Lester and **Geraldine McMahan** have been in ministry together 40 years.

Pastor **Jon Mountjoy** reports seven conversions, three baptisms, two rededications and an increase in attendance at **Marysville FWB Church** in **Marysville**.

Canaan Land FWB Church in **Grove City** averages 267 on Sunday mornings, according to Pastor **Mike Blanton**. The church reports 32 conversions, 21 baptisms and 15 new members this year.

More than 200 people were on hand as **Lockbourne FWB Church** in **Groveport** celebrated 35 years of service. Pastor **Leon Stevens** reports nine conversions, four baptisms and 10 new members.

Oklahoma: **Rejoice FWB Church** in **Owasso** voted to expand their gymnasium and remodel it for better serviceability. The renovation cost is around \$450,000. Pastor **Leonard Pirtle** said the church began three worship services and two Sunday Schools on Sunday mornings.

Tennessee: **Donelson FWB Church** in **Nashville** reports 11 baptisms and 17 new members. **Rob Morgan** pastors.

Free Will Baptist Bible College paid

tribute to **Allene Ellis** who gave \$50,000 to the school earlier this year. Mrs. Ellis has been a member of **Mt. Zion FWB Church** in **Ashland City** for 70 years. Her pastor is **Gene Parton**.

Texas: **Westfield FWB Church** in **Katy** closed out a successful 100-student VBS this summer. The church's Spanish congregation celebrated its second anniversary with a huge outdoor carnival. Pastor **David Ferguson** reports numerous baptisms.

Same church, new name. What started out as **Humble-Kingwood FWB Mission** relocated and took a new name—**Wildwood FWB Mission**, just north of **Kingwood**. **Gene Richards** leads the on-the-move congregation who now have a new sign to match their identity.

Big doings at **Hope Chapel FWB Church** in **Wichita Falls**, according to Pastor **Thurmon Murphy**. The church added a 24-foot fiberglass spire and a free-standing sign out front. They also replaced the pews with chairs, enlarged the stage area and remodeled the sanctuary. The church is using direct mailing, saturation evangelism and increased visitation to improve outreach. They sponsored a booth at the Texas-Oklahoma fair and were written up in the local newspaper. And they changed their name from **First FWB Church**.

Utah: Pastor **Bill Phillips** reports 85 conversions since **Valley FWB Church** began in **West Jordan**. Phillips was smiling a lot when a group from **Eastside FWB Church** in **Muldrow, OK**, arrived to conduct VBS for the congregation.

Washington: Members of **New Hope FWB Church** in **Kent** have raised \$150,000 and plan to build on their 2.23 acre parcel, according to Pastor **Brent Nix**. Construction estimates set costs for the 6,400-square-foot steel frame building at \$400,000. The structure will include worship seating for 200, four classrooms, a church office, kitchen and more. ■

Growing Close and Staying Close

By Sarah Fletcher, *CoLaborer* Editor



**WOMEN
NATIONALLY
ACTIVE FOR
CHRIST**

Free Will Baptist Ministry Focus

1 Time for fun in Tennessee, time for bed in Indiana.

2 Husband Don Harvey explains it this way.

3 Speaker Jan Harvey fine-tunes a point.

4 Bethany and Tyrell Wagner (TN), Don and Jo White (VA) and their group work to create a prize-winning masterpiece.

5 Couples fellowship during group activities.



Those two desires brought 49 couples from 12 states together for the 2nd National Marriage Enrichment Conference, September 19–21, in Pigeon Forge, Tennessee.

A joint effort by Master's Men and Women Nationally Active for Christ, the event drew younger and older, newlyweds and not-so-newlyweds—from Chad and Jennifer Donoho, married only two months and 22 days, to Fred and Cathy Green who'd celebrated 42 years together. Ministry leaders and lay couples alike shared a relaxing, weekend away.

Speakers Don and Jan Harvey, Christian marriage therapists from Nashville, Tennessee, offered helpful advice for couples in all stages of married life. No matter what stage, couples must make their marriage a priority. According to Dr. Harvey, "God's plan for marriage is simple; it's just not always easy."

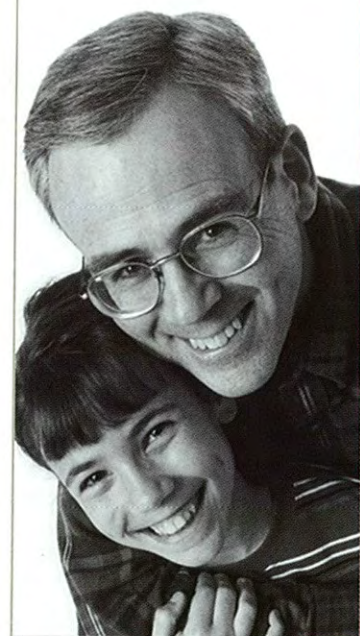
The conference included both group interaction and individual couple communication. On Friday evening, groups worked together creating

table centerpieces based on commonalities. Saturday session topics ranged from conflict to passion.

"Each of us brings something to the marriage," the Harveys commented, and invited couples to spend time alone interacting and determining how these "brought" qualities and traits have affected the marriage. Other couple tasks concerned communicating needs and establishing goals.

A Saturday evening candlelight banquet offered a delicious buffet and an opportunity for fellowship. Music by Chad Donoho and John Gorrell added to the weekend. Crisp, clear autumn weather, shopping malls galore and the Great Smoky Mountains provided attendees plenty of free-time choices.

"This was good," commented one couple from Ohio. "It's what every married couple needs to hear." ■



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Free Will Baptist Ministry Focus

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40 yrs.	\$59,973 ⁰⁰	+ \$8,085 ⁰⁰	= \$68,058 ⁰⁰
30 yrs.	\$21,834 ⁰⁰	+ \$2,838 ⁰⁰	= \$24,672 ⁰⁰
20 yrs.	\$7,459 ⁰⁰	+ \$914 ⁰⁰	= \$8,373 ⁰⁰
10 yrs.	\$2,042 ⁰⁰	+ \$229 ⁰⁰	= \$2,271 ⁰⁰

*Assumes earning's rate average of 10% participants contribute minimum of \$10 monthly.

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877-767-7738**

Life Is War

By Don Robirds, Director of Public Relations

"Life is war," declares John Piper in his book, *Let the Nations Be Glad* (Baker Academic, 1986). Who can doubt it with all we see happening around the globe today? Yet most of us take life somewhat for granted. We shrug when something happens close to us, then we move on.

Piper goes on to say, "Prayer is primarily a wartime walkie-talkie for the mission of the church as it advances against the powers of darkness and unbelief. It is not surprising that prayer malfunctions when we try to make it a domestic intercom to call upstairs for more comforts in the den."

The battle definitely is spiritual! It involves God and His angelic and kingdom forces against Satan and his fallen angel troops.

As the Apostle Paul declares, "...we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Ephesians 6:12).

Sadly, many Christians have become passive and fearful. Spiritual warfare signifies a "pro-active" approach to our faith and ministries. Paul says, "...the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds; casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God..." II Corinthians 10:4,5.

We actively resist the devil and discipline ourselves toward spiritual maturity and stamina. We

utilize prayer as a weapon to penetrate Satan's strongholds on behalf of ourselves and those on the front lines of battle for the Lord.

Wesley L. Duewel declares, "Prayer grasps hold of the promises of God and erects them like a wall between us and the powers of darkness. Prayer can bring God's angels rushing to our assistance" (*Touch the World Through Prayer*; Francis Asbury Press, 1986). It is absolutely essential that Christian prayer warriors respond to this challenge by engaging in warfare praying for missionaries and Christian workers around the globe.

The terrorist acts prevalent in the world today clearly indicate the enemy is more active than ever. He also seems to have more liberty to work than in the past. And Christian workers are more vulnerable than ever. Missionary martyrs increase in numbers annually and mental and emotional casualties among those serving abroad increase at an alarming rate. Discouragement and doubts are rampant in spite of efforts to provide counseling, training and member care.

With this supreme urgency in mind, Foreign Missions is seeking to make a head-on effort to

storm the throne of Heaven to erect spiritual walls of protection and provide omnipotent power to defeat the enemy and enable ministries to produce fruit. Prayer Summit 2004 in January of 2004 addresses this urgent need. Every church should seek to send a representative. See details on the left and register now. ■



FOREIGN
MISSIONS

Free Will Baptist Ministry Focus

Prayer Summit 2004

Camp Garner Creek,
Dickson, Tenn.

January 16-18, 2004



Registration Fee:

\$25 fee per person to be sent with application (non-refundable)

Accommodations:

Double occupancy \$140.00 per person to be paid at check-in*

Single occupancy \$185.00 per person to be paid at check-in*

*Includes room and six meals

For registration form and further information contact:

Judy Lytle, coordinator of Prayer Summit 2004

Phone: 615-731-4950 ext. 253 • E-mail: judy@nafwb.org

Registration form may also be downloaded from our Web site: www.nafwb.org/fm/prayersum.html



Send a representative from your church!

Activities:

- Plenary sessions to speak to your hearts
- Workshops to inspire and challenge your prayer life
- In-depth times of personal and corporate prayer

Leaders:

- **Dr. and Mrs. LaVerne Miley** to lead plenary sessions
- **Reverend Doug Little** to lead worship and praise

Workshops:

- "Developing an Aggressive Local Church Prayer Ministry," led by **Reverend Glen Johnson** of Chesterfield, Va.
- "The Basis of Prayer Journeying," led by **Eddie Payne**, director of mobilization and recruitment and **Doug Little**, director of stateside development
- "The Warfare Nature of Prayer," led by **Mike and Deleen Cousineau**, missionaries to Côte d'Ivoire



Let's Join Hands!

By Kenneth Akers, General Director

Everyone is familiar with Acts 1:8. Jesus tells His disciples to go and tell the good news everywhere. But many times we see this as a statement just for missions. While this is true, I believe it goes far beyond that and involves being a part of something bigger.

As I travel across our denomination, I find churches that don't see the need to be part of Master's Men, WNAC, Home Missions, Foreign Missions or any of our other national departments. The truth is, we all need to be part of the whole picture. While our churches can survive without an organized men's or women's group, many do much better because of them.

In recent years, Master's Men has been involved in several projects on local, state and national levels. Most recently Master's Men has helped provide many man-hours of work at Free Will Baptist Bible College renovating buildings. A group recently went to Alaska to work on the new mission church there.

As individual churches we can do much. Most of what local churches do is confined to their local church and community. That is great for your

Jerusalem. But what about your local association? How about your state projects? Could this be your Judea?

National Home Missions works hard to build Free Will Baptist churches across America. Samaria? And where is the uttermost part of the earth? Could it be where Foreign Missions is working to establish churches and get the gospel out to those who have never heard?

Getting more involved in the entire denominational work provides resources for all of us. The old adage that there is strength in numbers is true. When you unite with other believers in a common goal, the possibilities are endless.

Please consider joining hands with our national departments to reach the lost for Christ, to help strengthen our churches, and to draw men and women to a closer walk with Jesus. ■



Master's Men

Free Will Baptist
Men's Ministry

Free Will Baptist Ministry Focus

- Make an impact beyond your local church and community through Master's Men and other Free Will Baptist national departments.

www.nafwb.org/mm

Check it out! The Master's Men Department has updated their website. You can find out all kinds of information about Master's Men and their upcoming events with just one click.



Also take time to . . .
sign up for our
Master's Men Monthly Online Email Newsletter

Just send us your email address. We will send you all of the latest Master's Men news.



Thomas Marberry

“Daniel” in Apollos Old Testament Commentary

By Ernest C. Lucas (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2002, 359 pp., hardback, \$35).

This is the second volume

published in a new commentary series that focuses on the original meaning of the text and how that original meaning applies to the contemporary situation. The authors seek to bridge the gap between a centuries-old text and a much-different modern world. In order to accomplish this goal, they must have a thorough knowledge of the original language and culture as well as a good understanding of the current religious situation.

Ernest C. Lucas fulfills this role well. He is vice-principal and tutor in biblical studies at Bristol Baptist College, England. He is the author of several scholarly articles on Daniel and of more popular-level studies of various Old Testament subjects.

Most commentaries begin with an introduction that examines such issues as date, authorship and purpose. This author relegates these issues to an epilogue.

Lucas begins with a discussion of the textual criticism of Daniel. He describes the Hebrew and Aramaic text of the book and the various Greek and Latin versions that have survived. Lucas then analyzes the problems faced in translation and interpretation of ancient Hebrew texts. He presents general principles for interpreting the stories in the first half of Daniel and the visions in the second half. He concludes the introduction with an excellent discussion of the historical circumstances in which the book was written.

The commentary follows the natural divisions of the text of Daniel. For example, Lucas considers Daniel 1:1–21 to be a unit of material. He begins the analysis of this section with his translation of the Hebrew text, followed by a series of explanatory notes on the important words and

ideas found there. The author then outlines the form and structure of these verses. Next, he presents his commentary on the text and his explanation of how the text can be appropriately applied in a contemporary context.

The author presents a useful discussion of the possible reasons why Daniel did not want to eat the king's food in 1:8. First, he suggests that the food may have come from the temple and could have been offered to a pagan deity. Second, he notes that the Jewish food laws would not have been observed in the preparation of the food. Third, he posits that it may have been a question of allegiance that caused Daniel to act as he did. Lucas writes, “To accept and eat such food was, apparently, to commit oneself to loyal allegiance to the king.” This last explanation is the one he prefers.

Like most commentators, Lucas considers chapters 10–12 a single unit, apocalyptic in nature. He outlines the most common interpretations of the various empires mentioned in these chapters. Yet, he concludes that the main purpose of the chapters is not to give a detailed prediction of future events. Their main goal is to assure the people of God in every age of the ultimate triumph of God and His work in the world.

The author summarizes well the basic message of Daniel, “... the main point of the book in general, and of these verses in particular, lies not in its enigmatic numbers but in the call to remain stead-

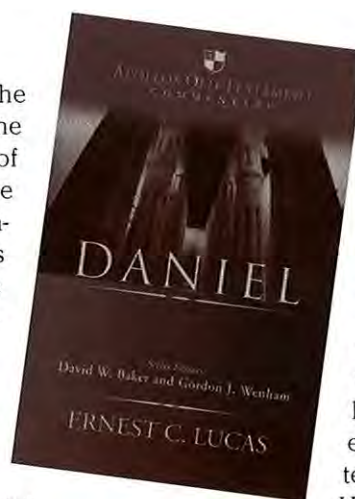
fast, trusting in God's deliverance, on the basis of the theological truths expressed in the book.”

This commentary is a useful but difficult piece of work. It is comprehensive in that it deals with all the major issues that we face in interpreting Daniel. Lucas does an excellent analysis of the textual criticism of Daniel. He even includes a study of the additions to the Hebrew

text that are found in early Greek manuscripts.

One advantage of this commentary is that the author seeks for and develops the abiding themes of the book of Daniel. He views the message of Daniel as a message for all generations; he does not search for detailed predictions of future events.

This commentary is not, however, easy to use. It presumes that the reader understands current issues in the field of Old Testament studies and possesses background in the study of Daniel. It is valuable commentary for the reader who has the necessary background and the perseverance to stick with the task. ■





Randy Sawyer

Praying and Praising the Psalms

German theologian and martyr

Dietrich Bonhoeffer once wrote,

"The entire day receives order and discipline when it acquires unity. This unity must be sought and found in morning prayer... The morning prayer determines the day. Squandered time of which we are ashamed, temptations to which we succumb, weaknesses and lack of courage in the work, disorganization and lack of discipline in our thoughts and in our conversation with other men, all have their origin most often in the neglect of morning prayer."

Most of us want the continuity of life Bonhoeffer extols, but lack the discipline to achieve it. For several years I struggled to maintain some sort of routine quiet time, only to be sabotaged by bad habits. Not until I developed the daily discipline of reading from *Psalms* did I experience a unity of purpose that added depth and richness to my life.

Reading the Psalms

I have made reading from *Psalms* my daily habit for several reasons. First, my college president, Dr. L.C. Johnson, told us to. In chapel services he frequently offered his own commentary, encouraging us that from the Wisdom literature of scripture comes the wisdom for life.

The *Psalms* contain the real life struggles of men and women, in real time and place history. Every human emotion finds expression in the *Psalms*. Joy and sorrow, expectation and fear, anguish, desperation, triumph, peace: all these passions are written into the songs and prayers of this collection of poems. And in response to these *cries of the heart*, God reveals Himself as the source of truth, reality and wisdom.

Almost daily I find myself with these ancient poets, crying out for the *guidance of a shepherd, the protection of a*

fortress, the forgiveness of a father or deliverance from an enemy.

Studying the Psalms

Second, I read daily from *Psalms* because I love great literature. In his reflections on *Psalms*, C.S. Lewis commented,

"What must be said, however, is that the Psalms are poems, and poems intended to be sung: not doctrinal treatises, nor even sermons. Those who talk about reading the Bible as literature sometimes mean, I think, reading it without attending to the main thing about it... That seems to me to be nonsense. But there is a saner sense in which the Bible, since it is after all literature, cannot properly be read except as literature. Most emphatically the Psalms must be read as poems; as lyrics, with all the licenses and all the formalities, the hyperboles, the emotional rather than the logical connections, which are proper to lyrical poetry."

One thing to remember when reading *Psalms* is that the poets did not employ the formal elements we often equate with modern poetry, such as meter or rhyme or rhythm. The chief formal characteristic of Hebrew poetry is what scholars call *parallelism*; that is the practice of saying the same thing in different words. For example, *Psalms* 2:4 reads, "*He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision.*" The point made is reinforced for stronger emphasis.

We must also remember to interpret the *Psalms* as poetry, with all the figurative and expressive language of any poetic work. Notice the rich symbolism in *Psalms* 18:7-10.

"Then the earth shook and trembled; the foundations also of the hills moved and were shaken, because he was wrath. There went up a smoke out of his nostrils, and

fire out of his mouth devoured... He bowed down the heavens also, and came down: and darkness was under his feet. And he rode upon a cherub, and did fly: yea he did fly upon the wings of the wind."

The language is beautiful, vivid and horrifying, our minds carried along by the graphic pictures to the deeper meaning of the imagery. There is quite simply no greater literature anywhere.

Praising the Psalms

Third, I read from *Psalms* daily because I long to know my Lord more intimately. In Saint Augustine's commentary on *Psalms* 44, he wrote,

"God wants to be loved not in order that He may get something out of it, but in order that those who love Him may receive an eternal reward. And this reward is God Himself, whom they love."

The best way to love Him is to get to know Him, and the best way to get to know Him is from scripture. But once more let us be reminded that the *Psalms* are not abstract treatises on the divine nature, but hymns of praise, songs sung by men who knew God, and in knowing Him, worshipped Him passionately.

In reading the *Psalms* we are led by the composers into the presence of God, and in praising Him, He is invited into our little lives. The psalmist declares that *He inhabits the praises of His people*. We read of Him that we may be in His presence, and we praise Him that He may be present in us.

Praying the Psalms

Finally, I read from *Psalms* daily that I may learn to pray. *Psalms* 72:20 refers to all preceding *Psalms* as the prayers of David. The Book of *Psalms* is more than a hymnbook, it is also a book of prayers, offered by men of prayer.

In his book titled *Praying the Psalms*, Thomas Merton wrote,

"If we are to pray well, we too must discover the Lord to whom we speak, and if we use the Psalms in our prayer we will stand a better chance of sharing in the discovery which lies hidden in their words for all generations."

The *Psalms* can serve as an important guide in learning how to pray. "*Lord, teach us to pray*," was the abiding request of the disciples. Concerning their petition Bonhoeffer commented,

"The phrase 'learning to pray' sounds strange to us. If the heart does not overflow and begin to pray by itself, we say, it will never 'learn' to pray. But it is a dangerous error, surely very widespread among Christians, to think that the heart can pray by itself. For then we confuse wishes, hopes, sighs, laments, rejoicings—all of which the heart can do by itself—without prayer. Prayer does not mean simply to pour out one's heart. It means rather to find the way to God and to speak with him, whether the heart is full or empty. No man can do that by himself."

Further, let us remember that the Book of *Psalms* is the Word of God, spoken, sung or written by holy men of God. So what better way to learn to pray than by repeating God's own words after Him? Bonhoeffer concludes,

"If we wish to pray with confidence and gladness, then the words of Holy Scripture will have to be the solid basis of our prayer. . . The word which comes from God becomes, then, the steps on which we find our way to God."

I read five *Psalms* each day, which enables me to read through the entire collection each month. I can't tell you how enriching that exercise has been to my spiritual life. Give it a try. ■

Receipts:				Year To Date	Year To Date	Year To Date
State	Designated	CO-OP	Total	Designated	CO-OP	Total
Alabama	\$ 100	\$ 0	\$ 100	\$ 3,815	\$ 1,286	\$ 5,102
Arizona	0	49	49	330	285	615
Arkansas	8,310	16,618	24,928	93,489	156,409	249,899
California	89	833	922	189	10,627	10,816
Colorado	0	0	0	0	0	0
Delaware	0	0	0	114	0	114
Florida	122	0	122	379	9,072	9,451
Georgia	25,765	1,737	27,502	297,313	15,813	313,126
Hawaii	0	0	0	0	0	0
Idaho	0	0	0	0	0	0
Illinois	11,822	2,897	14,719	110,236	25,080	135,316
Indiana	1,933	324	2,257	17,956	1,855	19,811
Iowa	0	0	0	0	65	65
Kansas	0	0	0	0	540	540
Kentucky	0	2,811	2,811	3,186	12,108	15,294
Louisiana	0	0	0	0	0	0
Maryland	0	0	0	0	0	0
Michigan	28,383	2,080	30,463	196,336	21,360	217,695
Mississippi	0	0	0	94,606	5,364	99,969
Missouri	45,516	16,735	62,251	384,523	149,307	533,830
Montana	0	0	0	0	0	0
Nebraska	0	0	0	0	0	0
New Jersey	0	0	0	0	0	0
New Mexico	644	12	656	4,420	244	4,664
North Carolina	1,927	3,829	5,757	13,821	23,985	37,806
Ohio	14,586	2,467	17,053	146,975	33,744	180,718
Oklahoma	50,923	12,571	63,494	526,451	98,458	624,908
South Carolina	47,231	3	47,235	402,723	258	402,981
South Dakota	0	0	0	0	0	0
Tennessee	3,187	1,510	4,697	107,114	13,855	120,969
Texas	0	0	0	94,648	2,704	97,352
Virginia	995	0	995	1,938	481	2,419
Virgin Islands	25	0	25	25	0	25
West Virginia	535	325	860	8,519	1,188	9,707
Wisconsin	0	0	0	0	0	0
Canada	1,509	19	1,528	7,010	128	7,138
Northwest Assoc.	1,029	0	1,029	1,029	0	1,029
Northeast Assoc.	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other	0	0	0	0	0	0
Totals	\$ 244,633	\$ 64,820	\$ 309,453	\$ 2,517,147	\$ 584,214	\$ 3,101,361

Disbursements:

Executive Office	\$ 1,563	\$ 29,169	\$ 30,732	\$ 13,740	\$ 262,896	\$ 276,637
Foreign Missions	161,300	8,200	169,499	1,508,195	73,903	1,582,098
FWBBC	16,019	8,200	24,219	205,483	73,903	279,386
Home Missions	54,223	6,417	60,640	701,466	57,837	759,303
Retirement & Insurance	167	4,991	5,158	3,395	44,984	48,380
Master's Men	973	4,991	5,964	6,306	44,984	51,290
Commission for Theo. Integrity	42	178	221	503	1,607	2,110
FWB Foundation	37	2,139	2,177	2,023	19,279	21,303
Historical Commission	42	178	221	503	1,607	2,110
Music Commission	0	178	178	292	1,607	1,898
Media Commission	65	178	243	912	1,607	2,518
Hillsdale FWB College	2,121	0	2,121	19,070	0	19,070
Other	8,080	0	8,080	55,258	0	55,258
Totals	\$ 244,633	\$ 64,820	\$ 309,453	\$ 2,517,147	\$ 584,214	\$ 3,101,361



Garnett Reid

A Prisoner's Last Words Ephesians 6:1-24

The letter which began in Heaven's highest places now ends in one of earth's lowest (6:20). Paul concludes this "epistle of the Heavenlies" (Schaff) with down-to-earth admonitions on two subjects: family relationships and spiritual warfare.

Relationships in the Household (6:1-9)

The chapter break between Ephesians 5 and 6 does not signal a disruption of Paul's thought between the two. He continues in chapter 6 with his counsel on family roles and relationships. What he says still falls under the principle of mutual submission introduced in 5:21. Its application extends to both children and their parents as well as to servants and their masters.

Children-Parents (6:1-4). Today's culture places enormous pressures on the parent-child relationship. Single-parent homes, less time together, increasing secular values, a disappearing childhood—all these and other factors raise the stakes when it comes to parental nurture of children. By the way, Christian

homes are not immune from these challenges.

Parents merit obedience and honor from their children, he affirms (vv. 1-2). Both these responsibilities flow from the character of God who established authority in the home as revealed in the fifth commandment (v. 2).

Disobedience to parents reflects a defiant spirit. No wonder scripture consistently rebukes such rebellion as evidence of an evil heart (Deut. 21:18-21; Rom. 1:30; II Tim. 3:2). Obeying one's parents is part of obeying Christ, as indicated by the phrase "in the Lord" (v. 1).

"Honoring" parents involves not only according them due respect, but also caring for them, even cherishing and prizing them as worthy persons. God blesses such devotion: "that it may be well with thee," He promises children, an offer that usually brings a long, fulfilled life (v. 3).

On the other hand, as the head of the family, fathers are not to abuse their authority by berating, humiliating or placing unreasonable demands on their children. Instead, Paul calls on the father to help his children grow by teaching and correcting them in a manner consistent with the Lord's own care (v. 4).

Servants-Masters (6:5-9). In biblical times, servants were usually considered part of the household and were more often than not treated with dignity (see Job 31:13-15). The servant owed his master submission in return, as evidenced in respect ("fear and trembling") and loyalty (v. 5). On a higher plane, these believing servants were actually serving Christ and were doing so not for appearances or simply to please any human, but because of their accountability to Him (vv. 6-8).

The head of the house owed his servants the same respect. As Paul says, "You are actually *both* servants," and the master, too, will face his Lord who will judge fairly regardless of status in this life.

Paul's teaching in verses 5-9 applies today to any situation involving positions

of authority and submission—the employer/employee relationship, for example.

Responsibilities in the Battle (6:10-24)

In the final section, Paul prepares believers to do battle against evil forces which wage war against the Lord and His people.

Be Strong (6:10-12). A stark command opens Paul's appeal: "Be strong in the Lord," he exhorts. In language reminiscent of Joshua (1:6, 7, 9), the apostle reminds readers of God's mighty power available to them (see Eph. 1:19; 3:16). He illustrates those provisions for them to fight in the Roman soldier's armor, protecting them from the devil's tactics (v. 11).

The enemy is not simply a physical, human opponent. Instead Paul explains in v. 12 that we "wrestle" (Gk. *palē*, only here in the NT) against the powers of evil at work in the unseen realms of this wicked age.

Stand firm (6:13-17). Four times Paul directs the believer to "stand" (vv. 11, twice in 13, 14). To equip us, God provides gear suited for the battle:

- **our belt is truth—that which is real, reliable and absolute**
- **our breastplate is righteousness—in our standing (Rom. 3:21-26) and in our experience (Eph. 4:24; 5:9)**
- **our shoes are readiness to proclaim the gospel of peace**
- **our shield is faith which will deflect Satan's fiery arrows**
- **our helmet is the salvation Christ provides**
- **our sword is God's Word wielded through us by His Spirit**

Speak boldly (6:18-24). The apostle's final concern is that he might have opportunity to speak the gospel with boldness (vv. 19-20). Though he is "an ambassador in bonds," Paul knows that their continual prayers and petitions for him and for all believers (vv. 18-20) will hasten the day when the battle is over and God gathers all things in Christ to the praise of His glory (Eph. 1:10, 12). ■

Kentucky

Jim Varney to Grayson Church, Grayson

Michigan

Gordon Edwards to First Church, South Haven

Missouri

Keith Garrison to Eastern Gate Church, Springfield

Lester Davis to First Church, Springfield from Eastern Gate Church, Springfield

South Carolina

Royce Horne to Pamplico Church, Pamplico

Bill Dority to St. John Church, Patrick

Chuck Thornton to Peace Church, Spartanburg ■

In these days of economic uncertainty, it's commonplace for individuals and ministries to analyze spending habits. At home

we evaluate every purchase, or ask can we afford to eat out tonight, do we have extra money for that unplanned trip to Wal-Mart? At church, the pastor and staff must project the potential income and discern if there will be enough to conduct all the ministry opportunities planned for the coming months.

Youth and children's ministry is often easy prey for budget cuts. After all, they don't produce income for the ministry. When dealing with a target audience whose average age doesn't allow them to drive or vote, much less hold down a part-time job, there's not much hope of getting a steady income or donation from your youth group. This makes it difficult to explain the need to spend money on the group while they don't pull their own weight financially.

The story is no different when it comes to Student and Children Ministries. We are often asked to explain our expenses in light of a limited income. Why do we need this piece of equipment or why must we be trained in this particular area? Is it worth it?

As our ministry year comes to an end, it's easy to reflect over the months of busy-ness and activity and answer those questions. Perhaps it would benefit you to look back over your year of activity and ministry with children and students and answer the question for yourself.

A vital component of any event is to evaluate the successfulness of the event. We often base success solely on numbers while overlooking the potential spiritual impact your ministry has made on one or two students.



Is It Worth It?

By Dean Jones, NYC Director



We see countless kids listening to the gospel, worshipping God, soaking up leadership skills. Numerous students answering God's call, coming to Christ, rededicating their lives and following Him. Is it worth it? You be the judge! ■

The following comments from students regarding the National Youth Conference and the Truth and Peace Student Leadership Conference helped us answer the question, "Is it worth it?" Perhaps they'll help you too!

- "I feel called to be a missionary in my school and possible missions later on...."
- "While at T&P, I answered the call to be a missionary...."
- "I didn't want to go back home to high school, I just wanted to stay. But I realized God wanted me to be a light on my campus and that I needed to evaluate my relationships back home."
- "For the past year I've struggled with letting go of past sins. God spoke to me about that. The services and quiet times were great too!"
- "I am going to devote a huge part of my time to God each day, that is something I had trouble with before."
- "I believe God is leading me to be a missionary ever since I left the conference."
- "I feel I am being called to be a missionary to Panama."
- I prayed for "purity of the mind."
- "I feel a call for ministry, maybe missions."
- "I prayed for my dad to be saved."
- "I asked God to reveal His will in my life concerning future plans."
- "I prayed to lay everything aside."



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January–December 2003

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- In part one, articles are listed in order of title, author, issue and number of the page on which they appear. The authors' division is alphabetized according to last name.
- Columns are listed in chronological order.
- The Newsfront index is alphabetized in six main sections: churches, ministers, laity, state ministries, national ministries and other.

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FWBBC Students Elect Officers	June, 14
Leadership Conference Set for December	November, 16
Leadership Conference Meets in Nashville	February, 20
Marilyn Pritchard Ends 19 Years	October, 16
Missouri Steering Committee	December, 15
Music Commission to Release Booklet in Tampa ...	July, 15
New Randall House Ministers Manual & N.T.	October, 17
Nominating Committee Announces Nominees	April, 19
Ron Callaway Joins Bible College Faculty	September, 20
Truth and Peace Celebrates 20 Years	July, 15
2003 Yearbooks Available	February, 16
2003 Yearbooks Coming	January, 20
2004 Yearbooks Coming	December, 14
229 at FWBBC Welcome Days	February, 15

MINISTERS

Barker, Lewis	February, 18
Brooks, Homer	May, 20
Brown, Nuel	July, 14
Dodd, Damon	August, 17
Edwards, John	April, 20
	July, 16
Ferguson, A. F.	February, 17
Jones, Norlin	July, 16
Lewis, Hoover	April, 16
Norris, Gene	February, 18
Phillips, Wayne	October, 19
Scott, Tom	May, 20
Sweeney, Winston	May, 18
Tafaoa, Fitu	August, 17
Thomas, Roy	June, 13
Tolbert, J. D.	April, 17
Vandivort, Herbert	February, 17
Wiley, Tom	November, 17
Worthington, Melvin	March, 20
Worthington, Milton	January, 20

LAITY

Thigpen, Yvonne	March, 18
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CHURCHES**Arkansas**

First FWB Church, Jonesboro, AR	December, 13
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Georgia

First FWB Church, Savannah, GA	May, 19
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BEYOND BELIEF**Illinois**

First FWB Church, Decatur, IL	December, 13
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Oklahoma

Crossroads FWB Church, Jenks, OK	September, 21
Pleasant Hill FWB, Norman, OK	May, 19

Tennessee

111 Fellowship, Cookeville, TN	December, 14
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Virginia

Bloss Memorial FWB Church, Arlington, VA	August, 18
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West Virginia

Sophia FWB Church, Sophia, WV	March, 18
	March, 20
Sunshine FWB Church, Huntington, WV	July, 14

STATES

Alabama	January, 21
	February, 16
	December, 14
Arizona	June, 13
Florida	February, 15
	August, 18
Georgia	June, 12
Illinois	June, 12
Mississippi	January, 20
Missouri	October, 17
New Mexico	August, 16
North Carolina	September, 20
Ohio	October, 18
Oklahoma	January, 21
South Carolina	June, 12
Tennessee	January, 18
	March, 19
Virginia	September, 20
West Virginia	September, 22

OTHER

Appalachian Christian School	December, 15
Children's Home Fire Contained	April, 18
Gateway Christian College Begins	September, 22
Gateway College Opens With 33 Students	November, 18
Group Announces Preaching Conference	March, 20
Hillsdale College Reports 348 Students	November, 19
International Fellowship Meets	January, 19
Mid-Tenn Christian Workers' Conference Meets	July, 16
Southeastern Announces New Faculty/Staff	September, 21
Southeastern College Enrollment Tops 137	November, 18
Southeastern College Names Stox President	April, 18
Steve Greenwood Wins CMP Designation	July, 15
Theological Commission Publishes Integrity II	October, 17
Theological Symposium Set	July, 15
Theology Symposium Meets at FWBBC	January, 20
2003 State Association Meetings	February, 19
52 Enroll at California Christian College	November, 16



Jack Williams

Christmas—Get it Right!

Have you noticed how easy it is to like Christmas? That's even true for cartoonists who often miss the point. One of my favorite Christmas 'toons shows Dennis the Menace bouncing into the room with a big box in his hand.

Dennis grins at his mother and says, "We'd better tell Santa Claus to forget about the train set I asked for. I just found one on the top shelf of Dad's closet."

Christmas curiosity is natural for kids of all ages. But it takes more than curiosity or great expectations to explain the irresistible, irrepressible spirit of Christmas. What gives Christmas its sparkle? What brings us back year after year to gaze at the star and hear sermons about wise men?

Christmas is about starting over, starting fresh with something new and untried. It's about snuggling up to something so full of hope it cannot be ignored. Christmas is about people—ordinary people caught up in their busy lives with financial struggles and hard questions. It's about people juggling political issues and religious mysteries.

Joseph and Mary, two leading players in the drama, were regular people on their way to pay taxes when Christmas unfolded in Bethlehem. Can't get more ordinary than that. They both seemed quite surprised by all the attention they received (Luke 2:19).

Christmas is about giving gifts for the right reasons (Matthew 2:11), about angels and good news (Luke 2:10–14), about men working the hoot-owl shift (Luke 2:8). It's about keeping old promises (Matthew 1:22–23).

That first Christmas stunned the world and divided time. Christmas is God's announcement that He's still in charge, there's a way out of gloom and despair, that the best events don't require official sanction.

No, not everyone likes Christmas in spite of all the laughter, joy and hope it

brings. That's because Christmas refuses to fit guidelines established by politics and religion. The first Christmas villain was a political hack named Herod (Matthew 2:16–18). If Christmas could be killed, Herod would have done it before the New Testament was two chapters old.

Why do people despise something so beautiful, clean and holy, you ask. The short answer is bad politics and bad theology. Political jealousy rained blood and terror on the first Christmas. Theological blindness aimed the sword and egged on the hatred. Herod raged against Christmas because he saw a political challenger (Matthew 2:3).

On the other hand, thick-headed liberal theologians don't have a problem with the Child . . . so long as He remains the first-born son of Joseph and Mary. But they tsk-tsk sagely when the Christmas Child is called the virgin-born Son of God.

Don't muddy Christmas with doctrine, fulfilled prophecy and something as unlikely as the virgin birth, they pontificate. The problem with Christmas, however, is that was the day God became a man.

Honest, folks, that's the reason for the season. Christmas is not about reindeer or brightly-lit trees or turkey dressing. Taking the virgin birth out of Christmas makes about as much sense as removing freedom and independence from the Fourth of July.

The first Christmas almost didn't happen after a godly man named Joseph discovered that the young woman (Mary) he was about to marry was pregnant before they consummated their union. She claimed she did not get pregnant the usual way, but was pregnant by the Holy Spirit (Matthew 1:18) and was still a virgin.

If you find that hard to believe, you're not alone. Joseph didn't believe it either, but he didn't want to embarrass her publicly, so he made plans to put her away

quietly (Matthew 1:19) and get on with his life.

Since it took an angel to convince Joseph that Mary had not betrayed him (Matthew 1:20), you can understand why the idea of a virgin birth causes people to shake their heads. Still, the Bible is clear that Jesus' birth was a unique, one-time-only event carefully monitored by God (Matthew 1:22–23).

There's more. Jesus came to earth virgin-born to do the impossible—save people from their sins (Matthew 1:21). The Christmas story gets right down in the weeds where fallen humanity lives. No ribbons, no wrapping paper.

I like the sights, sounds and smells of Christmas as well as the next guy. I like the happy faces, the big smiles, the overflowing generosity and the wonderfully uplifting music. After all, Christmas was God's idea.

But the original Christmas didn't end with happy older parents staring out the window at disappearing taillights as kids drove home, snug and content. The first Christmas pageant pulsates with screams, death and blood (Matthew 2:16–18) as innocent children are murdered at the whim of a madman.

Yes, it's ugly, brutal and in shocking contrast to what we've come to expect. The Christmas event closes with Joseph, Mary and the Child running for Egypt to escape death (Matthew 2:13–14). No star, no wise men, no shepherds. Saving people from sin takes more than a virgin birth. But that's where the story begins.

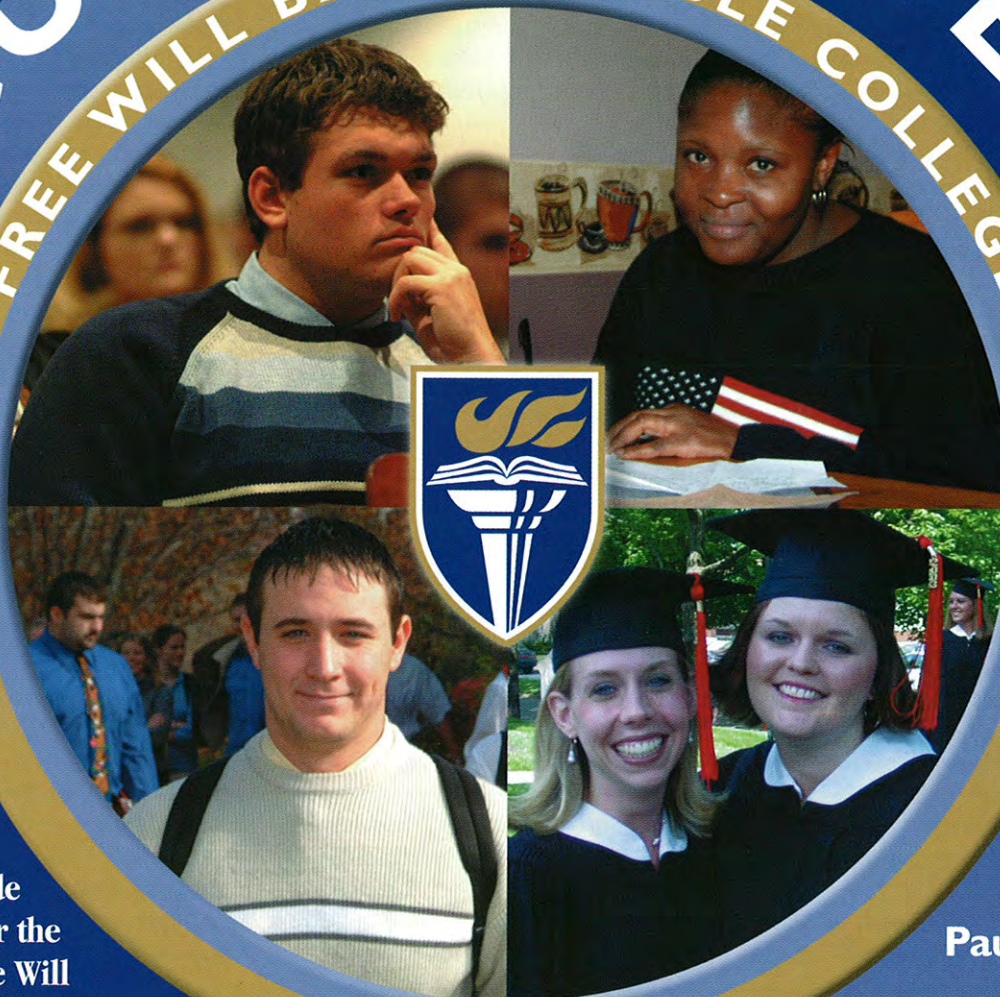
So, let's get it right this year. The Christmas Child came to die for us. And He did. Praise God! ■

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