

CONTACT

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What to Do with Santa Claus

God in the Straw

The Other Side

God's Surprises

Bells at Midnight



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DECEMBER 1992

VOLUME 39, NO. 12

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THE SECRETARY SPEAKS



Melvin Worthington

Kneel Before the King

How to celebrate Christmas in perspective remains a difficult task for those who would honor the Lord. Society focuses on commercialism and consumerism intent on making as much money as possible. Toys, tinsel and trinkets advertise a different agenda by retail and wholesale merchants during the Christmas season. Sinful humanity pays token homage to the general concept of Christmas and encourages Christians to celebrate by buying and sharing.

Christians have a unique opportunity during the Christmas season to share the good news of the gospel with the world that does not understand the person, purpose and provision of Christ—the Messiah in the manger. Christians need not boycott Christmas celebrations but exhibit a balance which honors and glorifies God. Here's how that can be done.

Know the King

Properly celebrating Christmas begins with personally knowing who Jesus Christ is and why He came. When John the Baptist saw Jesus, he declared, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29).

Matthew's account identifies Him as Jesus, the One who would save His people from their sins. Matthew further identifies Jesus as Emmanuel which means *God with us*.

In the birth of Christ, God became a man in order to identify with man and thus provide payment for mankind's sin. The babe in the manger which becomes the focus of Christmas is God incarnated in human flesh. He came into this world in the fullness of time to die for the sins of mankind.

His advent, agenda and atonement were not afterthoughts with God but the fulfillment of the divine plan. Jesus is the Lamb of God which takes away the sin of the world, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, and the Lord of creation and redemption. It is this concept of Christ which prompts proper Christmas celebration.

Kneel to the King

Only those who have bowed their heads, hearts and hands in submission to Jesus Christ can properly celebrate Christmas. As the wise men brought gifts and bowed before Christ, so we must kneel before Him in humble submission to His plan for our lives.

True Christmas celebration flows from hearts yielded to the Lord Jesus Christ. He is our Maker, Master and Mediator. There can never be proper worship and praise until our all is on the altar before Him. As did Isaiah, we must say, "Here am I, send me."

Proper celebrating of Christmas requires a humble, honest kneeling before our Lord in absolute acknowledgement of Him as Lord, adoration of Him as Lord and allegiance to Him as Lord. Christmas celebrating remains a very personal thing. As an individual I must yield myself to Him in total surrender giving Him the preeminent place in my life and labors.

Keep the King's Commandments

Obedience characterizes those who love the Lord. Jesus declared that those who loved Him would keep His commandments. John emphasized that the commandments of Christ were not grievous to those who loved Him. Obedience remains the hallmark of believers who love the Lord.

Yes, even during our celebration of Christmas we must do so as obedient children. All that we plan and participate in must glorify and magnify Christ. How sad to hear someone say, "Remember to keep Christ in Christmas," or "We must put Christ back in Christmas." Without Christ there is no Christmas! Without Him, we have nothing to celebrate.

Various concepts of Christmas account for the variety of ways in which Christmas is celebrated. Those who do not know Christ, who do not kneel before Him and do not keep His commandments can never fully celebrate Christmas.

Those who belong to Christ need not boycott Christmas celebration, but balance and blend the proper meaning of Christmas into the festivities of Christmas. With boldness believers can declare the truths of the gospel effectively during their Christmas celebrations.

Join with me in celebrating Christmas—the special season during which we commemorate the advent, atonement, agenda and advocacy of Christ—the Messiah in the manger.

The Secretary's Schedule

Dec. 7-8 All-Boards Conference
Nashville, TN

Dec. 8-10 Executive Committee Mtg.
Nashville, TN

What Are We Going to Do with Santa Claus?

By Bill Evans

That's the question a friend asked me several years ago when my sons were young. It was a good question. Today the youngest is a junior in college and the question no longer has the same relevance for us. Now the significant question for our family is this: Has the way we dealt with Santa produced compatibility with our Christian faith and practice? I believe the answer is, "Yes."

So universal is the Santa myth that we find it in almost every culture. To the Dutch he is Sinterklaas; to the English he is Father Christmas. The Germans call him Weihnachtsmann or Christkindl or Christ Child. However, it is not so rigidly established that it cannot be changed.

For example, Rudolph and his red nose have been added during my lifetime. Furthermore, if we ask our friends, "What do you think about Santa?" each will give a different answer.

Thirty Christmases ago my wife and I established our home and our first Christmas. Soon, one, two, three children came on the scene. How did we deal with Santa? Would we do things differently if we could start over with children now (we have just become grandparents for the first time, so in a sense we will)?

I think not. From the beginning we tried to make sure we kept Santa in a proper perspective to our Christian faith. That meant we did not

hide our heads in the sand as far as Santa's pervasive presence was concerned. And we understood the vast difference between the fictional world of Santa and the *real* world of Jesus Christ. We approached the subject of Santa Claus in four ways.

Reality and Make-Believe

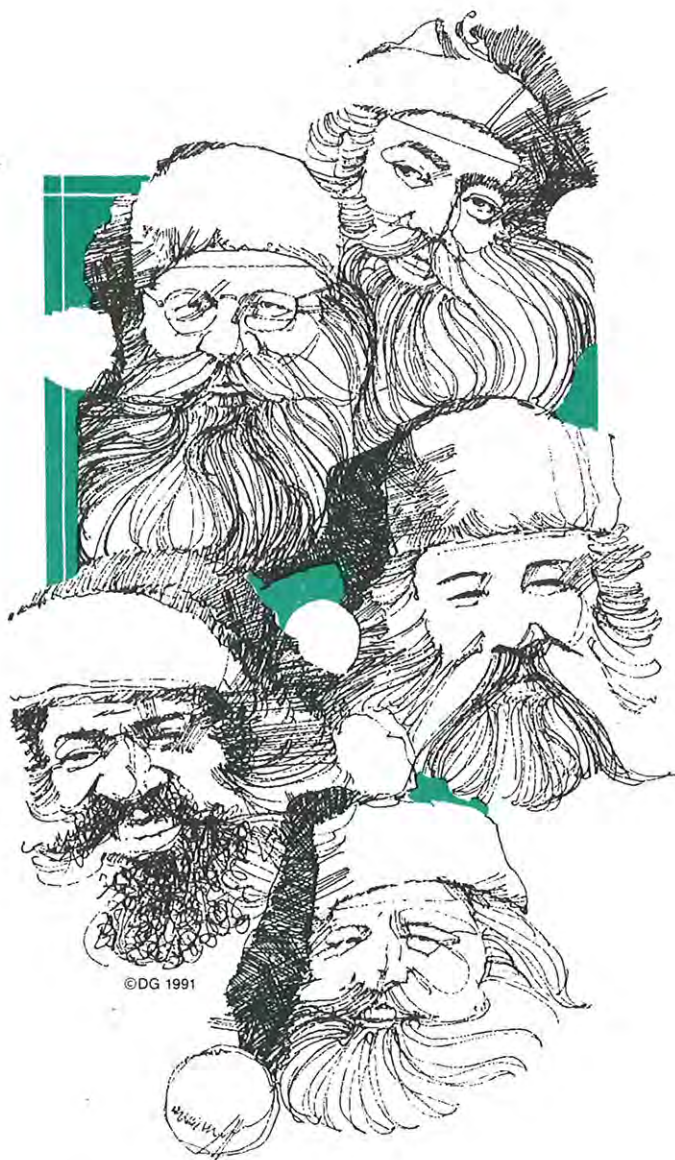
First, we recognized the difference between Christian reality and human make-believe.

All children, even the big, older ones called adults, have imaginations and exercise them in the world of make-believe. Kids invent new universes with their toys, games, books, stories and TV programs. Adults conjure fresh experience

through fiction. When these imaginings become so real that tears flow and adrenaline surges, pretense gains every symptom of reality.

This human capacity for make-believe is normal and good. But a red flag should be raised when an individual cannot tell the difference between the real and make-believe. Keeping Santa in the realm of make-believe is important. If adults keep him there, their children will too.

The Santa myth was not forbidden in our home. We allowed him the same credence as Winnie-the-Pooh and Spiderman. No more. Santa did not replace the reality of Christ. We knew we could not make Christ more real by striking out the Santa myth. Destroying the imaginary, in



my opinion, is not the way to arrive at the true meaning of Christmas. This is one time when lighting a candle of faith is better than railing against the darkness.

The Commercial Side

Second, we recognized that the Christian Christmas will not replace the commercial one.

Like it or not, the celebration of December 25 by this world system is not designed for worship of the Christ Child. Last year the major news related to the Christmas season was slow sales. We must recognize that this is the tone and intent of Christmas as arranged by business and industry.

A family I know allows each child to choose one toy for Christmas. One day the mother took her five-year-old son shopping. They stopped to visit the department store Santa Claus. Soon the lad was seated on Santa's knee. He was asked that famous old question: "What do you want Santa to bring you for Christmas?" Without hesitation the little fellow named the one red fire truck of his dreams and stopped.

Santa asked, "What else?"

"Nothing," the little fellow replied.

For a moment dear old Santa almost lost his beard, but regaining his composure, he prodded, "Wouldn't you like Santa to bring you . . .," and the list included all the things boys his age had been asking for.

We discouraged such encounters between jolly red Santa and our chil-

dren. To our children we simply said, "The gifts under the tree are from your mother and me, not Santa Claus." The way we talk about Christ and relate to His presence will do more to keep a proper perspective than any campaign to wipe out Santa.

The Christian Difference

Third, we recognized the difference in the Christian home and the world community.

An acquaintance of mine once asked me what kind of Christmas I had. My answer focused on our family being together, enjoying each other and our simple family traditions around holidays. He wasn't satisfied with my answer. What he wanted was a list of the loot I had received. That fits the world's Santa Claus emphasis on "self."

Our challenge was to avoid emphasis on self. We tried to develop a sense of confidence, worth and purpose in each of our children within the context of grace. We wanted to communicate that real value is based upon God-given gifts and the use that God has for their lives, not the accumulation of things or positions in this world. We found that this philosophy conflicts with the world's system, but it sure keeps Santa in his place—even for little children.

Trust vs. Theories

Finally, we recognized that Christian trust opposes many world theories.

The world requires an explanation for everything. Since it has already rejected the Son of God, it must have some rationale for celebrating Christmas. A commercial one, not a supernatural one, is preferred.

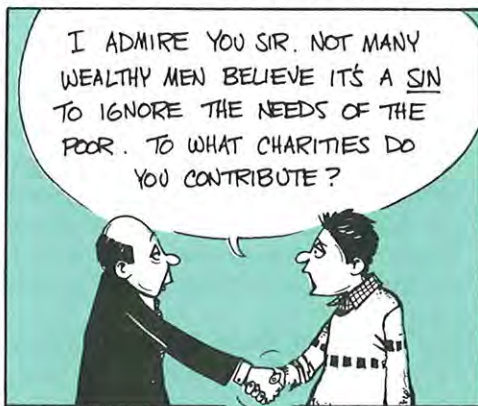
In spite of that, the reality of the nativity can never be replaced by the world's crass commercialism. Oh, I don't mean to sound naive. It isn't that the world won't try the exchange; it is just that the world's toys, no matter how expensive, won't satisfy for long.

So what will you do with Santa Claus? I suggest you let him be. If we live Santa and merely talk about Christ, we lose everything. If we live Christ, we can talk about Santa and do no harm. Keep God's Son as the real center of your Christian life. Your family will see the truth. ■



ABOUT THE WRITER: Reverend Bill Evans serves as administrative assistant with the Board of Retirement. He is a member of Donelson Free Will Baptist Church in Nashville, Tennessee.

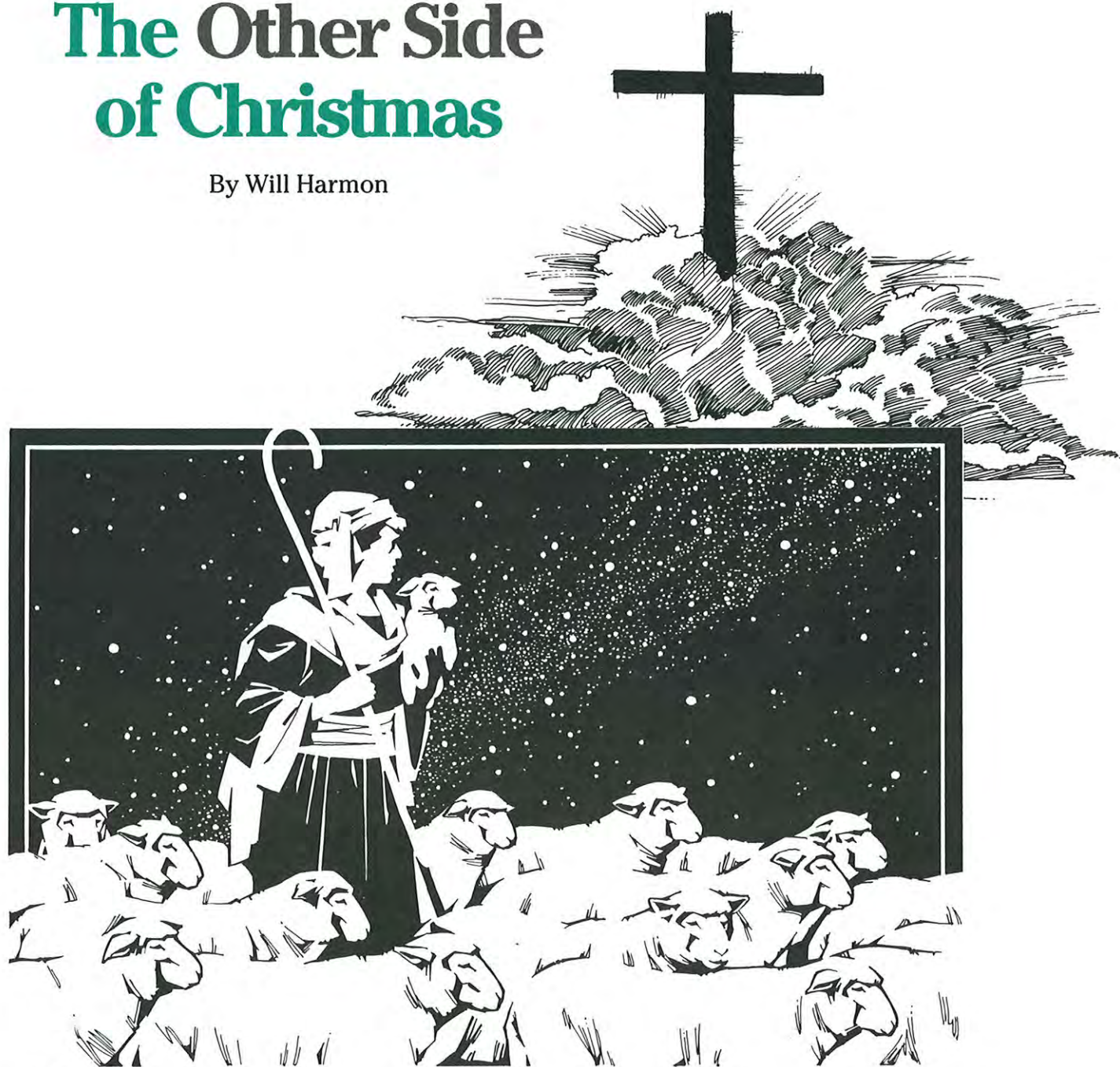
BEYOND BELIEF



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The Other Side of Christmas

By Will Harmon



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Throughout time reactions to Jesus Christ have remained the same. Nowhere may man's reaction to the Christ be more dramatically seen than in the contrast between His first week and His last week: His cradle, His cross and His conquest.

The cradle and the cross mark the two self-evident points of our

Savior's greatest human weakness. However, God uses the weak things to put to shame that which man calls strong. That is part of the wonder of the weakness of God in the cradle and on the cross. Look at the journey from weakness to weakness that produced the greatest victory in history, the journey from cradle to cross to conquest.

He came in weakness as an infant,

and Luke records, "Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man" (Luke 2:52). He grew in the strength of wisdom until He was wisdom incarnate. He grew in stature until He had reached the highest representation of what God intended ripened manhood to represent.

The voice from heaven ratified that He had grown in favor with God,

Who said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matt. 3:17). The crowds that followed Him could not be kept away by either distance or darkness. They witnessed to the strength that He had with man.

But the end was just as the beginning. For then, when the cradled Christ became the Christ of the Cross, His growth in strength was suddenly reversed, and He became a paralyzed and prostrate man. His growth in wisdom seemed to be canceled in the foolishness of the cross. His growth in favor with God seemed to be called into question by the desertion of God while Christ was on the cross. In addition, His favor with men was canceled in the shame of the cross.

Part of the wonder of the infant Christ and the crucified Christ is that in both instances is seen the wonder of the weakness of God. It was God's deliberate intention to show through these instances that the weakest things of God are stronger than the strongest things of man, and that the most simple things of God are wiser than the wisest things of man.

As the mature, majestic, manly Messiah our Lord taught, healed, prophesied, but never in the maturity of His manhood did the Magi march from the mysterious East nor did a star come and stand over where He was. No, it was in the wonder of the weakness of the cradled Christ that mysterious Magi marched from the East and bowed down at the Messiah's manger and a star in the heavens haunted haughty Herod, King of Jerusalem.

The infinite power of the infant Savior is a theme for Christmas meditation. Before His lips had ever framed a word, before His hands had ever worked a miracle, before He had ever promulgated a doctrine, there was a disruption on the earth and a disjunction in the heavens.

Likewise, unusual, unnatural events occurred as He hung on the tree. Matthew tells us that the earth quaked so that everyone in Jerusalem felt it. As His eyes were closed in death at high noon, it became midnight at midday and the sun itself

closed its eyes and refused to shine.

But why? What is the meaning of this? Why emphasize the wonder of the weakness of God at His cradle and His cross? For this reason: At the cradle and the cross, man is seen in his pompous parade of power and pride. The kings, priests and masses of people rejected Him.

Today is no different. Modern man, with his mass media, global mobility and phenomenal advancements in technology disregard the Divine One. Potentates and world powers hold Christ in contempt. Yet Christ in His very weakness shows us that God Almighty at His "weakest" is more powerful than man at his most potent, and that man at his strongest is no match for God at His "weakest."

It is the paradox of God, the great reversal of God, the unfathomable wisdom of God. We see it in the cradle, the cross and the ultimate conquest. "God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty" (I Cor. 1:27).

After the birth of Christ, the infant Savior is taken away to another land but returns to establish His earthly ministry. After the crucifixion, Jesus dies, but by the power of God He is brought back to life through the resurrection. In both cases God has confounded the political and spiritual leaders who assembled against Him and His Messiah. But to those who believe and receive the Christ of the cradle and the cross, the power of God unto salvation is made known.■



ABOUT THE WRITER: Reverend Will Harmon pastors Oak Park Free Will Baptist Church in Pine Bluff, Arkansas.

Any Questions?

By Toni Kemble



The devotional question was, "What verse have you read which keeps you going in life?" What *verse*? I need more than a verse, I need *verses*. Sometimes, I need an entire book. In fact, I sometimes feel like God Himself can't keep me going in life.

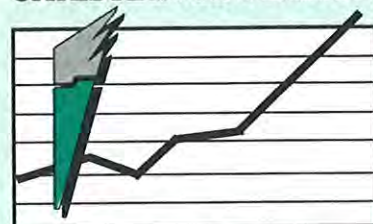
It's as though I'm clinging to the bottom of His robe—clinging for dear life. What makes me cling? What makes me want life? Why don't I just let go of Him? I'm weary with fighting, especially since most of the time I'm fighting myself.

Why do I cling to Him with one hand and double my other as a fist to hit Him? ■

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ABOUT THE WRITER: Toni Kemble was a student at Free Will Baptist Bible College when she wrote this article. She is from Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

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God in the Straw

By Carroll G. Alexander



The birth of Jesus Christ is the most significant event in the history of man since the fall of man 6,000 years ago. It was the event toward which God had been moving for all ages past—"the fullness of time" had come (Gal. 4:4, Rev. 13:8).

Yet, it was hardly noticed by the world. Except for a few shepherds on a hill, some wise men from an eastern country and wicked King Herod and his court, the event glided by like a ship on a foggy night.

Most Missed it All

The men from the East were directed to Israel by the appearance of a special star; the shepherds were told by angels sent from Heaven, and Herod knew only because of the innocent inquiry of the wise men. Indeed, he never would have cared had he not considered the coming of the Savior a threat to his own reign.

By the visit of these wise men, he was brought into a unique position of access to the Savior. However, his main concern was pleasing the emperor of Rome by whom he was appointed King of Judea. He chose to favor the corrupt emperor of the Roman Empire rather than serve the King of Kings. In a short time he died without hope. This course is the path of millions today.

It was not that few were available to note His coming. Jerusalem was a prominent city of the empire, and Bethlehem lay nearby, only five miles to the southeast. It was a special registration for taxes required of all. Bethlehem was crowded that night and a "no vacancy" sign hung at the inn.

The prophets had foretold His coming, and Daniel had even given the approximate time (Dan. 9:24-25). Yet, His coming went unnoticed because, like today, man was interested in something else.

While the wise men, the shepherds, Mary and Joseph were held in awe by His coming, most people who ever knew at all only saw a stable, some lowly farm animals, a poor carpenter and his wife, lots of straw and the birth of just another baby.

What Really Happened?

What did all that mean? What really happened in that lowly place of birth? The prophet had said, "Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us" (Mt. 1:23).

The Apostle Paul later reflected upon this event, "And without controversy great is the mystery of god-

liness: God was manifest in the flesh . . ." (1 Tim. 3:16).

The Bible clearly teaches the divinity of Jesus. He is "the image of the invisible God . . . by him were all things created . . . he is before all things, and by him all things consist. . . it pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell" (Col. 1:15-19).

He is the Son of God by whom the Father "made the worlds . . . the express image of his (the Father's) person" (Heb. 1:2-3).

The Apostle John declared, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God . . . All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made. . . And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth" (John 1:1, 3, 14).

The Divinity Factor

The divinity of Jesus is of utmost importance. Note the words of Jesus: "I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins" (John 8:24).

The fact that this doctrine is so important is made evident also by the attempt of Satan to discredit it.

He majors on strategic targets.

Jehovah's Witnesses say that Jesus is simply a glorified angel—once Michael, the archangel. Mormons say that He is the son of a god who was once a man, himself. Modernists say that He is the son of God in the sense that we are sons of God (John 1:12). But the Word of God declares that He is the "only begotten Son" (John 3:16), meaning the only one of this kind.

What does His divinity mean to us? It is the key to our redemption. The ultimate sacrifice for sin had to be holy with no necessity to die for His own sins. He had to overcome the tempter on the mount of temptation and die the ultimate death on Calvary. It took the unlimited Savior to bear the Hell of all human beings for all eternity in those few hours upon the cross.

Today's Story

What do you see in the birth of Jesus? Recently I heard a radio comment that joked about a Christmas party where someone brought a pudding shaped in the form of the babe in the manger. This comment turned out to be part of a commercial for a special brand of champagne. Millions celebrate Christmas without Christ but with liquor, wild living and a lifestyle that results in violence, murder and other senseless tragedies.

I am so glad that, like the wise men of old, I have seen beyond the straw-strewn stable and embraced the living Savior. That night He lay among the cattle in the hay; today He lives within my heart. ■



ABOUT THE WRITER: Reverend Carroll G. Alexander pastors Columbia Free Will Baptist Church in Columbia, South Carolina, where he has served since 1961. He is a graduate of Free Will Baptist Bible College.

The Factor in Christmas

X = ?

X = ?

X = ?

By Dennis E. Hensley

One evening this past December, I was helping my son with his algebra homework. Each problem was presented with a variety of multiples on the left and right sides of an equal (=) sign. In each problem the challenge was to figure out what the X factor was (that is, the unknown quantity). Once "X" was solved, it could be multiplied by the given numbers and both sides of the equation would balance.

After an hour of working calculations we had finished the assignment. We decided to drive downtown to do some Christmas shopping. As we drove past the various shopping malls, we saw signs reading, "Xmas Trees for Sale," and "Mail Early for Xmas," and "Xmas Gift Wrapping Sold Here."

I nodded at the signs. "Even for Christmas it seems that X is the unknown factor," I said to my son. "Everybody wants to find 'Peace on Earth' and 'Good Will Toward Men,' but they can't solve the problems of the world until they discover that the unknown factor is filled with reference equations that explain what X is equal to."

"Oh?" asked Nathan. "Like what?"

"Well," I began, "how about 'X equals 70 times 7' in regard to forgiveness? Or how about 'X equals 1000' when it comes to the number of hills God owns the cattle on? Or how about 'X equals 99 plus one' when it comes to rescuing the lost sinner?"

My son smiled, then said, "Sure. Or X could also equal two, in regard to Christ's second coming . . . or three, in that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are one God."

I added, "Or X could equal 500 plus 50 when it comes to forgiving all debtors" (Luke 10:11).

I parked the car in front of a department store.

"That's a pretty good start," I said. "We could probably make a sizable list with all sorts of mathematical variables, but in each instance the equation would only be balanced if we substituted Jesus for the unknown factor. Whatever is missing, whatever is needed . . ."

"... Jesus leads to the solution," said Nathan.

"Right," I agreed. "You're pretty sharp."

My son tapped the side of his forehead with his index finger and replied, "Not sharp . . . just X-cellent!" ■



ABOUT THE WRITER: Dr. Dennis E. Hensley is the author of *How to Stop Living for the Applause* (Servant Publishers).

Living by God's Surprises

By Yvonne Wolfenbarger

When I showed up on Evelyn's doorstep last November, she could tell right away that my spirit was as dark and rainy as the night. She poured hot chocolate and let me snuggle under a warm quilt. We talked and I began feeling better.

The holiday season was approaching. I'd always loved Thanksgiving and Christmas. Being part of a large family meant a special time with brothers, sisters, nieces, nephews, aunts, uncles and cousins. However, this holiday held no such promise.

My mother had died in May. My daughter, Angie, could only get one day off work. That meant we couldn't go to Ohio as usual. Besides, we didn't have money to travel. No white Christmas for us. Our friends were leaving town to be with their families and we expected a lonely holiday season.

Before we ate the snack Evelyn fixed that night, she prayed. She thanked God for the food and then she asked Him to bless me and give me some special surprises during the holiday season. What a heartfelt prayer it was. But I thought it was an odd request on my behalf. I didn't forget her prayer.

A few days later, I received a Christmas gift from my boss at Free Will Baptist Bible College. It was a book titled, *Living By God's Surprises*. As I leafed through the pages, I remembered Evelyn's prayer. How strange that I should get a book about God's surprises in light of that prayer. The author said that we have to be aware of our circumstances and look for God's surprises or we may miss them.

I decided to keep my eyes open and to start making a list of God's blessings on my life.



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One night the next week Angie came bouncing up the steps with a smile on her face. Her boss had given her a special surprise—five days off work at Christmas! (She was the only one to get more than one day off.)

Then my sister called and said that she and her husband and their daughter and son-in-law would be coming for a week during the holidays. We hadn't spent Christmas together for years. What a surprise.

I got unexpected bonuses for both jobs. I got another unexpected check for \$100. We had money to go to Ohio after all.

As I visited my sister in Ohio, she brought out a set of pearls that had belonged to my mother. "You can have these. I think Mom would like that," she said. It was the best surprise of all.

God's surprises amaze and delight us. They also disrupt our lives and humble us. I must say that not all the holiday surprises appeared

to be for my good. Like the car accident I had. I wasn't hurt too badly and my car wasn't hurt at all. Some good things came of it too.

I woke one night with my leg hurting badly. It wasn't a blood clot as the doctor first thought. Surprise! It turned out to be a back problem instead. An allergic reaction to the medicines they gave me for my back complicated my problem even more. But I healed surprisingly fast. Folks from work and church surprised me with much love and concern. They really did care after all.

Tragedy often waits over the next hill. But when it comes, we also find God at work in surprising ways.

Frequently during that holiday season I remembered Evelyn's prayer. Thank the Lord for such a friend. And for directing my boss to choose that book as a gift. Through it I was reminded that God works all things together for my good.

God's surprises sometime explode into our lives, and sometimes we have to squint to see them. But they're there. I've come to realize that there are no *surprises* to God but only blessings from an all-wise and loving Father. ■



ABOUT THE WRITER: Mrs. Yvonne Wolfenbarger serves as executive assistant to the Woman's National Auxiliary Convention and assistant dormitory supervisor at Free Will Baptist Bible College. She is a member of Woodbine Free Will Baptist Church in Nashville, Tennessee.



Sad little tree. Limbs hang low. Poor thing, drooping its weary head under a starry crown. Flashing lights encircle it top to bottom, blinking in crazy fashion. Colorful ornaments hang from each branch. A golden string of garland winds and twines among the baubles and balls.

Here and there bits of evergreen needles poke through with evidence that there is indeed a tree underneath the glittering costume it wears.

Watching, I wonder how long it can endure. So many ornaments adorn the tree that it has lost its shape and threatens to collapse under the weight.

My children watch as I begin removing some of the glitz. "No, Momma!" they wail. "It won't be pretty!"

Trying to assure them that sometimes less is more, I continue to disrobe the tree until only the lights, a few bows and ornaments remain. Stepping back to view the effect, my daughter, Amy, now thoroughly disgusted, turns to me and says, "Now I can see the tree!"

Caught between pleasing the children and doing what I know is right, I stand firm and say, "You're *supposed* to see the tree!"

Timothy chimes in with, "Yeah, if people don't see the tree it just looks like a mess hung in the air." We snicker at the thought of ornaments, lights, bows and garland hanging on nothing but thin air.

Christmas. The word calls up visions of brightly decorated trees, candy canes and gaily wrapped gifts. Children, eyes wide with excitement, eagerly await the blessed day.

"How many days 'til Christmas, Momma?" she asks, eyes big and

hopeful. The answer she receives produces a frown of disappointment. With shoulders stooped she turns from me muttering, "Why is it taking so-o-o-o long to get here?"

Returning to my housework, I silently muse at the differences between us. She anticipates Christmas with sparkling eyes and excited animation. Each day brings a heightened level of agitation as the long awaited celebration draws near. Her eyes behold the wonder. Her ears hear the angels singing. Eagerly she watches as brightly wrapped boxes topped with shiny bows are placed under the tree.

I, on the other hand, act as though a grinch has stolen the joy of Christmas. Instead of anticipation, I dread the preparation. Rather than gazing in awe, I peek out from beneath the increasing work load. With ears deaf to the angelic choir, I hear the din and confusion of crowded stores. Refusing to rejoice in the bounty of the season, I complain about the cost.

She moans because Christmas is so far away. I groan because there is so little time and so much to do.

Like the little tree, I, too, am bent out of sorts by the decorations of Christmas. The season of peace and good will has become an occasion of greed and indulgence. Christ is no longer visible.

Our Christmas has turned Christless. We still read the Christmas story. We remember His coming both in word and song. But there are too many decorations on the tree that distract our eyes and thoughts away from Him—Jesus—our Tree of Life.

Let's remove these decorations and get back to the basics. As Christians, we recognize Jesus as "the reason for the season." Therefore, our celebrating and decorating must be that which compliments Christ.

Paul said in Romans 12:2a, "... be not conformed to this world . . ." Our method of celebrating Christ's birth—Christmas—should, must be different from that of the world around us.

We have a message to proclaim. Removing some of the decorations will allow Christ to shine through so others can say, "I can see the Tree! I can see Jesus!" ■



ABOUT THE WRITER:
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Free Will Baptist Church
in Reynolds, Georgia.



One winter day stands out like a boulder in my life. The weather was unusually cold, our salary had not been regularly paid, and it did not meet our needs when it was.

My husband was away, traveling from one district to another much of the time. Our boys were well, but little Ruth was ailing, and at the best, none of us were decently clothed. I patched and repatched, with spirits sinking to their lowest ebb. The water gave out in the well, and the wind blew through the cracks in the floor.

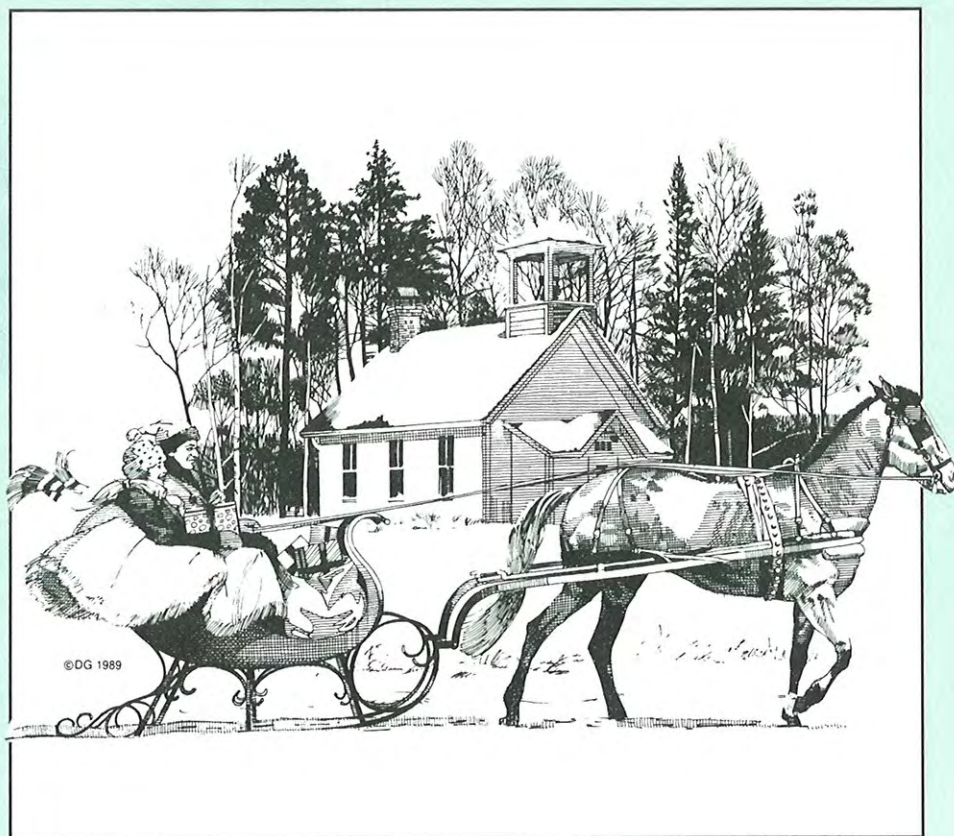
The people in the parish were kind and generous, but the settlement was struggling for itself. Little by little, at the time I needed it most, my faith began to waver. Early in life I was taught to take God at His Word, and I thought my lesson was well learned. I had lived upon the promises in dark times until I knew, as David did, "who was my fortress and deliverer." Now a daily prayer for forgiveness was all I could offer.

My husband's overcoat was hardly thick enough for October, and he was obliged to ride miles to attend some meeting or a funeral. Many a time our breakfast was Indian cake and a cup of tea without sugar.

Christmas was coming; the children always expected their presents. I remember the ice was thick and smooth and the boys were each wanting a pair of skates. Ruth, in some unaccountable way, had taken a fancy that the dolls I had made were no longer suitable; she wanted a nice, large one, and insisted on praying for it. I knew it was impossible; but oh, how I wanted to give each child a present.

It seemed as if God had deserted us, but I did not tell my husband all this. He worked on earnestly and heartily. I supposed him to be as hopeful as ever. I kept the sitting-room cheerful with an open fire, and tried to serve our scanty meals as invitingly as I could.

The morning before Christmas James was called to see a sick man. I put up a piece of bread for his lunch—the best I could do—wrapped my plaid shawl around his neck, and



then tried to whisper a promise, as I often had; but the words died away upon my lips. I let him go without it.

I coaxed the children to bed early, for I could not bear to hear them talk. When Ruth went, I listened to her prayer; she asked for the last time most explicitly for her doll, and for skates for her brothers. Her bright face looked so lovely when she whispered to me: "You know, I think they'll be here early tomorrow morning, Mama."

I thought I could move heaven and earth to save her from disappointment. I sat down alone and gave way to most bitter tears.

Before long James returned, chilled and exhausted. He drew off his boots; the thin stockings slipped off with them, and his feet were red with cold. I would not treat a dog that way, let alone a faithful servant.

Then as I glanced up and saw the hard lines in his face and the look of despair, it flashed across me, James had let go too. I brought him a cup of tea, feeling sick and dizzy at the very thought.

He took my hand, and we sat for an hour without a word. I wanted to

die and meet God and tell Him His promise was not true; my soul was full of rebellious despair.

There came a sound of bells, a quick step and a loud knock at the door. James sprang up to open it. There stood Deacon White.

"A box came for you by express just before dark. I brought it around as soon as I could get away. Reckon it might be for Christmas; at any rate you shall have it tonight. Here is a turkey my wife asked me to fetch along, and these other things I believe belong to you." There was a basket of potatoes and a bag of flour. Talking all the time, he hurried in the box, and then with a hearty "Good night!" he rode away.

Still without speaking, James found a chisel and opened the box. I drew out at first a thick red blanket, and we saw underneath it was full of clothing. It seemed at that moment as if Christ fastened upon me a look of reproach. James sat down and crossed his face with his hands.

"I can't touch them," he exclaimed. "I haven't been true—just

A Sound of Bells At Midnight

By A Minister's Wife on the Frontier

when God has been trying me to see if I could hold out. Do you think I could not see how you were suffering? And I had no word of comfort to offer. I know now how to preach the awfulness of turning away from God."

"James," I said, clinging to him, "don't take it to heart like this. I am to blame. I ought to have helped you. We will ask Him to forgive us."

"Wait a moment, dear. I cannot talk now." Then he went into another room.

I knelt down and my heart broke; in an instant all the darkness, all the stubbornness rolled away. Jesus came again and stood before me, but now with the loving word, "Daughter!" Sweet promises of tenderness and joy flooded my soul. I was so lost in praise and gratitude that I forgot everything else.

I do not know how long it was before James came back; but I knew he, too, had found peace.

"Now, my dear wife," said he, "let us thank God together," and then he poured out words of praise—Bible words, for nothing else could express our thanksgiving.

It was eleven o'clock, the fire was low, and there was the great box, and nothing touched but the warm blanket we needed. We piled on some fresh logs, lighted two candles, and began to examine our treasures.

We drew out an overcoat. I made James try it on—just the right size. I danced awhile around him, for all my lightheartedness had returned. Then there was a cloak, and he insisted on seeing me in it. My spirits always infected him, and we both laughed like children.

There was a warm suit of clothes and three pairs of woolen hose. There was a dress for me and yards of flannel, a pair of Arctic overshoes for each of us, and in mine was a slip of paper. I have it now and mean to hand it down to my children. It was Jacob's blessing to Asher, "Thy shoes shall be iron and brass, and as thy days so shall thy strength be."

In the gloves, evidently for James, the same dear hand had written, "I, the Lord thy God will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, fear not, I will help thee." It was a wonderful box and packed with loving care.

There was a suit of clothes for each of the boys and a little red gown for Ruth. There were mittens, scarves, and hoods. Down in the center was a box. We opened it, and there was a great wax doll. I burst into tears again; James wept with me for joy. It was too much, and then we both exclaimed again, for close behind it came two pairs of skates.

There were books for us to read (some of them I had wished to see), stories for the children to read, aprons and underclothing, knots of ribbon, a gay little tidy, a lovely phonograph, needles, buttons and thread, actually a muff, and an envelope containing a ten-dollar gold piece.

We cried over everything we took up. It was past midnight, and we were faint and exhausted with happiness. I made a cup of tea, cut a fresh loaf of bread, and James boiled some eggs. We drew up to the table before the fire. How we enjoyed our supper! Then we sat talking over all our life, and how sure a help God had always proved.

You should have seen the children the next morning. The boys raised a shout at the sight of their skates. Ruth caught up her doll and hugged it tightly without a word; then she went into her room and knelt by her bed. When she came back, she whispered to me, "I knew it would be here, Mama, but I wanted to thank God just the same, you know."

"Look here, wife, see the difference." We went to the window and there were the boys out of the house already, skating with all their might. My husband and I both tried to return thanks to the church in the East that sent the box, and have tried to return thanks unto God every day since.

Hard times have come again and again, but we have trusted Him, dreading nothing so much as a doubt of His protecting care. Over and over again we have proved that "they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing." ■

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A unique approach to Christmas celebration

A Different Way

By Marilyn Pritchard

Some folks think Staci is a bit strange when it comes to Christmas. She approaches it from a different viewpoint. You see, Staci is a Christian who is tired of the fluff and commercialism of the Christmas season.

There's no Christmas tree in Staci's apartment, no strings of lights. And there aren't many decorations on the walls or bookshelves. She's not particularly fond of the Christmas parties that crowd the weeks from Thanksgiving to New Year's Day, keeping people's minds off the significance of the season.

Yet Christmas is special to Staci because it represents the time when her Savior came to earth in human form, the time of His birth. He is so extraordinary that the season celebrating His birth is one of unique meaning to Staci. She chooses to commemorate that meaning in a different way.

For one thing, Staci wonders how many (Christians in particular) remember Whose birthday it is. If they do, do they give *Him* a gift at this special time of year? Yes, Staci has a Christmas club at her local bank. But not all of it goes to buy gifts that are wrapped and placed under someone's tree.

She thinks, "It is, after all, the Lord's birth in human form that we celebrate at this time of year. Are we not glad that He was willing to lower Himself to enter our world in our form as a baby so He would know what our lives were like? Are we not pleased to have had Him among us to know our needs and feelings and longings and weaknesses?"

Then she wonders, "What do we say when we give someone a birthday or Christmas gift? Aren't we

saying that we appreciate that person, that we love them and that we care about them? That we're glad they're part of our lives?"

And yet at Christmas time we often forget the One for whom the whole season began. That's why Staci believes it is appropriate to give a gift to the One who came to earth and later died to give her salvation, the One she appreciates above all others.

Since she can't send a cash gift directly to Heaven, she finds a worthy project and gives a gift that way to her Lord. Her Sunday School class sponsors a worthy project and provides for someone in need: someone in her church or a missionary serving the Lord on the foreign field. She gives a gift to that project as a gift to her Lord, in honor of His birthday.

One year it occurred to her that a \$5 or \$10 gift to the Lord was inappropriate. She spent much more on some people on her Christmas list. Where did He come in her list of important people? She realized that He was the most important person in her life; without Him nothing else mattered. Shouldn't her gift reflect that? From then on when her Christmas club check came in November, she made sure that the gift to the Lord was at minimum the size of the largest gift she gave to anyone else, usually more.

Staci has difficulty understanding why people pump frivolity and fluff into the season. They exhaust themselves, spend too much, eat too much, put on extra weight, complain about it all, and end up with post-season blues after the New Year. And in the midst of the carryings-on, they usually manage to block out the reason for the season: the Lord Jesus Christ. No won-

der they're blue after the reveling.

She would rather spend time with the Lord celebrating Him. If He had not come, she would not have the opportunity to know Him personally. She would only have known of a far-away God, not the personal God who resides in her heart, knows her every thought, guides her life and cares what happens to her. He is truly a God to celebrate.

So on Christmas Day, Staci prefers to spend the day alone with her Savior, praising Him, resting in Him, rejoicing in Him, thanking Him for all He's done for her. She's glad He's part of her life. She welcomes Him into her home and wishes Him a happy birthday.

Oh, sure she realizes that God is eternal and in reality has no birthday. And she also realizes that December 25 is probably not even the day of His human birth on earth. But it is the appointed time to celebrate that birth since we don't know when it was. And she delights to celebrate with Him.

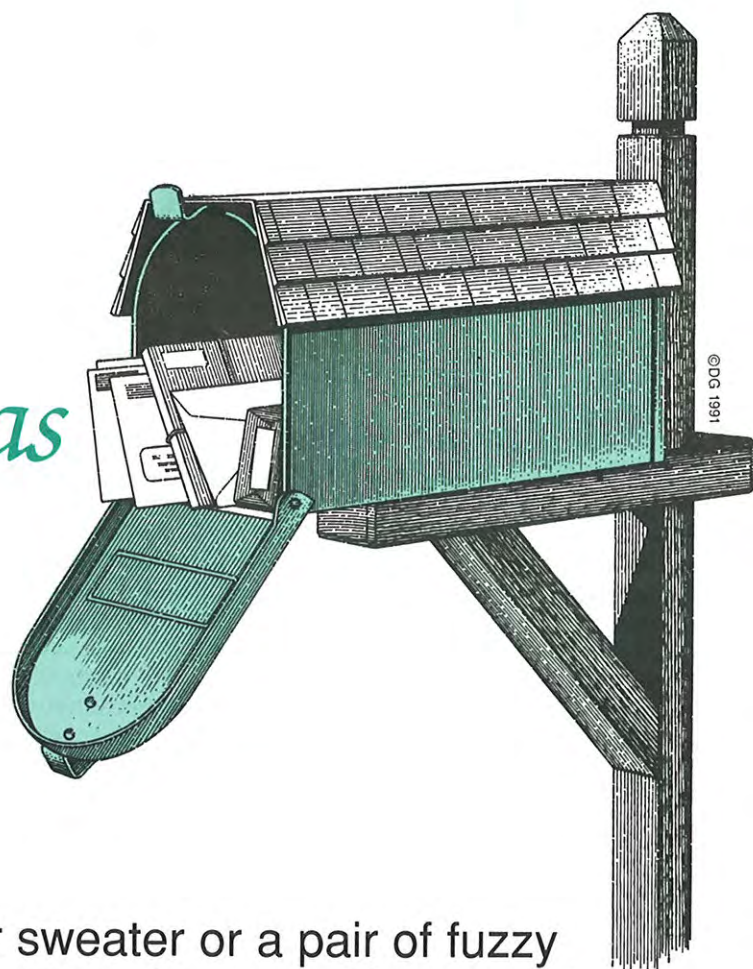
Other people think Staci is a bit strange. Friends and family, even those who are Christians, don't understand her lack of enthusiasm about traditional celebrations: her not trimming a tree, not attending parties, not decorating the apartment, wanting to spend Christmas Day at home "alone." She has reasons for her behavior. She looks at life differently. She has thought through her priorities and tries to keep them straight. She wants to be different from the world. And, besides, she's not alone on Christmas Day. She celebrates with the Honoree. ■

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ABOUT THE WRITER: Marilyn Pritchard is editorial assistant for *Contact* and a member of Cofer's Chapel Free Will Baptist Church in Nashville, Tennessee.

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Merry
Christmas

every
month
this
year . . .



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FREE WILL BAPTIST NEWSFRONT

WNAC Retreat Attracts 640 Women

RIDGECREST, NC—The seventh annual WNAC National Retreat registered 640 women from 22 states, according to Executive Secretary Mary Wisheart. The women met at Ridgecrest Conference Center in the Blue Ridge mountains of North Carolina, September 17-19. Their theme was "Tomorrow's Wonders."

Ten seminar leaders addressed concerns about women in the church, family and community. Speakers included Yvonne Brown, Patricia Collins, Brenda Evans, Vernie Hersey, Delois Loveless, Lorene Miley, Ruth Mullen, Cleo Purcell, Amy Robinson and Debe Taylor.

"Missions 2000" on Friday evening highlighted 11 home and foreign missionaries. Partici-

pants pointed up how God makes Himself known in the world today and how women can be a part of His plan. Amy Robinson and Florine Coscia, retired missionaries, challenged the women to commit themselves, their children and grandchildren to declaring salvation to all people.

Angela Trotter and her pal, Lumpsey, provided delightful moments with laughter and Bible thoughts especially for women.

Lisa Wallace, music coordinator, with Carol Reid at the organ and Susan Ervin at the piano, taught the women the chorus, "I Wonder," composed by Beverly Welch for the 1992 retreat. Lisa also presented the concert, "A Song for Tomorrow" Friday afternoon.

Mrs. Laura Thigpen helped attendees relax and laugh Thursday evening with her monologue, creative drama and list of how to avoid calories. Saturday morning she challenged attendees to live in anticipation of Christ's return.

"Take Five" on Saturday gave women a chance to meet five new people and share five blessings from the retreat and five prayer requests.

The next retreat at Ridgecrest is scheduled September 15-17, 1994.

Tapes of the 10 seminars, Mrs. Thigpen (2) and Angela and Lumpsey are available at \$4 each from WNAC.

Indiana Church Breaks Ground

INDIANAPOLIS, IN—Members of PeaceFWB Church in Indianapolis broke ground for a new church this summer, according to Pastor Dan Runion. The group expects the \$815,000 construction project to take about six months.

If inclement weather does not cause delays, the First Phase Project should be completed by early spring 1993. First Phase seating will be approximately 400 with total seating to reach 700-750.

Pastor Runion said,

"When we are finished with the total phases, the project with the Family Life Center will be around \$1.3 million. We are try-

ing to target our community with mailings and other outreach to find out what their needs are and what we can do to reach them with the gospel."

Runion said that 84 people attended the July 15 ground breaking ceremony. More than a year ago, the Peace Church was damaged by fire. Reverend Runion has completed his first year as the church's pastor and is spearheading the building project.



Pastor Dan Runion (center) handles shovel at ground breaking.

Mae Fry, Author and Poet, With the Lord



NASHVILLE, TN—Mrs. Malcolm C. (Mae) Fry died July 8, 1992, after an extended illness. She was 61. Funeral services were conducted July 10 in Nashville, with Dr. Charles Thigpen officiating.

Mae influenced many lives across the denomination through her writings. She wrote and developed the three-year

cycle of Junior Adventurer CTS curriculum and also served briefly as Junior editor for the Sunday School/CTS Department. She authored numerous published writings including seven Christmas plays, one non-seasonal play, four gospel tracts, CTS Timely Songs and a book of poetry—*Life and Light in Poetry*.

Mrs. Fry coordinated Junior-age after-service activities at the National Association for six years, beginning in 1972. She taught sign language in Free Will Baptist churches and colleges for 20 years. Her love and burden for deaf people spread to those in her classes. She established ministries to the deaf/hearing impaired in three Free Will Baptist churches: First FWB Church—Tucson, AZ; Woodbine FWB Church—Nashville, TN; Unity FWB Church—Smithfield, NC.

Mae served with her husband, Dr. Malcolm C. Fry, in two home mission works—Lake Charles, LA and Tucson, AZ. She was serving with her husband as he pastored Goodlettesville FWB Church, just outside of Nashville at the time of her death.

Mae was known for her gift of evangelism. She never feared to speak out for her Lord. Witnessing seemed to come natural for her, and she used every opportunity available to do so. Even through illness, Mae was a vibrant witness for Christ. If she didn't have the strength to stand and talk with someone, she would at least give them a tract.

She is survived by her husband, Dr. Malcolm C. Fry; two sons, Craig and Matt; two daughters, Pam, and Becky (Gwartney); and five grandchildren.

Youth Experience "Operation Idaho"

MONETT, MO—Eight young people from First FWB Church in Monett took a nine-state, 10-day mission trek across the western United States in August, according to youth pastor, Lance Rogers. Pastor Ken Dodson labeled the witnessing trip "Operation Idaho."

The eight youth—Kristen Hood, Jill Mackey, Karen McCully, Kelli Mackey, Rhonda Hensley, Amanda Terry, Reagan Arnaud and Darcy Hensley—along with four sponsors traveled by van from August 5 to August 15, covered more than 3,000 miles and conducted four special services in Free Will Baptist churches.

The group spent three days in Rupert, Idaho, and participated in a youth rally at First FWB Church in Rupert. The rally "brought several area youth

groups together for a night of fellowship and sharing different experiences as Christian teens."

The Missouri youths also conducted a special program at First FWB Church in Jerome, Idaho. The program included drama, instrumentals, a monologue, singing and featured Darcy Hensley presenting a song in sign language as her mother sang.

The group stopped for a final service at First FWB Church in Cheyenne, Wyoming. The group has worked more than two months to earn funds for the 10-day missions trip.

Lance Rogers said, "This trip made a life-changing impact on our young people." Pastor Ken Dodson said the group gave testimonies and showed slides at church on two Wednesday nights after they returned to Monett.

Capital Stewardship Campaign September 1992 Update

State	Goal	Gifts
Alabama	\$ 97,290.00	\$ 1,000.00
Arizona	1,565.00	1,800.00
Arkansas	97,880.00	14,780.94
Atlantic Canada	2,000.00	.00
California	21,925.00	.00
Colorado	1,005.00	505.00
Florida	26,365.00	.00
Georgia	48,620.00	5,726.00
Hawaii	235.00	.00
Idaho	450.00	.00
Illinois	20,600.00	100.00
Indiana	10,020.00	500.00
Iowa	340.00	.00
Kansas	1,640.00	.00
Kentucky	45,150.00	.00
Louisiana	120.00	1,020.00
Maryland	8,675.00	.00
Michigan	19,250.00	1,553.00
Mississippi	19,815.00	.00
Missouri	77,025.00	14,382.46
Montana	35.00	50.00
Nebraska	130.00	.00
New Mexico	760.00	.00
North Carolina	75,285.00	1,250.00
Northeast Assoc.	1,125.00	.00
Northwest Assoc.	1,385.00	.00
Ohio	52,115.00	.00
Oklahoma	117,505.00	.00
South Carolina	23,350.00	100.00
Tennessee	100,040.00	19,394.05
Texas	14,705.00	3,140.00
Virginia	30,975.00	.00
West Virginia	58,840.00	320.00
Other	23,780.00	1,400.00
Totals	\$1,000,000.00	\$67,021.45

College Unveils Official Portrait

NASHVILLE, TN—Free Will Baptist Bible College officials unveiled a portrait of Dr. and Mrs. L. C. Johnson in a special chapel service held on campus Wednesday, September 23. The portrait will be hung in the Johnson Classroom Building, the college's learning center.

The 24" x 30" oil portrait was part of a project initiated by the FWBBC Board of Trustees in May 1990, when they renamed the classroom building in honor of Dr. and Mrs. Johnson. It was announced at the time that a portrait of the

college's first president and his wife would be hung in the building's entrance.



Present for the unveiling were members of the college family,

representatives from departments of the Free Will Baptist National Offices and several members of Dr. Johnson's Sunday School class at East Nashville FWB Church.

After the unveiling, Dr. Johnson spoke on the constant transformation every Christian is undergoing. FWBBC President Tom Malone made the concluding remarks and Music Department Chairman Vernon Whaley closed the service by leading *Majestic Sweetness*, one of Dr. Johnson's favorite hymns.

Kansas Church Plans to Triple

TOPEKA, KS—Members of First FWB Church in Topeka entered a year-long Sunday School enlargement campaign in September 1992, according to Pastor Billy Barlow. "The church family is excited about reaching a goal of triple attendance in one year," he said.

Attendance increased by 15 the first two weeks of the campaign, up to 67. Pastor Barlow expects the church to reach 156 by September 1993, if their enlargement plans succeed.

In the past year, the church has recorded 17 baptisms. On Pastor Appreciation Day, Barlow reported three conversions and eight baptisms. Members used that occasion to present Barlow and his wife with plaques of appreciation and other gifts.

The First FWB Church of Topeka is one of nine Free Will Baptist churches in the Kansas State Association.

FWBBC Launches Tape Ministry

NASHVILLE, TN—A search for outstanding chapel and conference messages is under way within the cassette archives at Free Will Baptist Bible College, according to Harrold Harrison, director of external studies.

The recollections of administrators, teachers, staff and alumni will be called upon to ferret out the best tapes from chapel, Bible and missionary conferences and other campus settings. Selections will be made only after each has been audited.

These tapes will be available through the external studies division for \$3 per tape, plus 10% for postage and handling. Each tape will usually contain two messages. Four tapes ordered at one time will be \$10 plus postage and handling. In order to keep expenses low, a check or money order must accompany each order since no billing will be done.

Some alumni may recall a particular message heard from the FWBBC pulpit. If you do, send the college the preacher's

name, the year you heard it, and the gist of the message. "We will seek it out for you if it was taped," says Mr. Harrison.

A leaflet listing a limited number of titles will be available from the college soon. As the list of tapes grows, a catalog will be prepared.

"These powerful messages will bless, edify, inspire, confirm and stimulate you and those in your church or family," according to Mr. Harrison. You can use them in family devotions; to "charge" your own spiritual battery, for youth groups; or listen to them while traveling in your car, he says.

"Messages from God's Word are timeless but affect eternity. Purchase them. Listen to them. Act upon them. They will do you good."

Address all correspondence to:

Tape Ministry
Free Will Baptist Bible College
3606 West End Avenue
Nashville, TN 37205

Reverend Chad Russ Dies



WELLINGTON, KS—Seventy-three-year-old Chad Russ, a Free Will Baptist minister for 32 years, died June 7, 1992, from illness due to pneumonia and Alzheimer's disease. Reverend Russ was ordained to the gospel ministry on March 3, 1960. He had been a resident of Wellington since 1967.

During his ministry, Rev. Russ pastored five churches in North Carolina, Oklahoma and Kansas. Failing health forced him to retire from full-time ministry in 1974. He served as a supply pastor until 1988.

Rev. Russ grew up in North Carolina, the son of a minister, and was well-known for his deep love for the Free Will Baptist work and people. From an early age he was active in gospel music, leading singing and participating in quartets.

Funeral services were conducted by Reverend Wayne Bookout and Evangelist Wade Jernigan, a nephew of Rev. Russ. Jernigan said of his uncle at the funeral, "No man ever so marked me; no one could have cared more."

Chad Russ is survived by his wife, Inez; two sons, Beauford and Reford; one daughter, Darlene Sanderson.

Cooperative Channel Contributions

September 1992

RECEIPTS:

State	Design.	Co-op Undesignated	Total	Sept.'91	Yr. To Date
Alabama	\$ 82.30	\$ 30.00	\$ 112.30	\$ 190.88	\$ 2,766.85
Arizona	.00	59.40	59.40	469.37	1,990.70
Arkansas	5,100.40	.00	5,100.40	4,792.30	76,040.98
California	35.00	879.03	914.03	.00	8,620.77
Colorado	.00	.00	.00	.00	505.00
Delaware	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
Florida	.00	3,253.01	3,253.01	4,007.16	12,295.22
Georgia	.00	.00	.00	8,546.85	90,427.93
Hawaii	.00	.00	.00	.00	221.00
Idaho	.00	.00	.00	.00	89.86
Illinois	20.00	70.07	90.07	.00	61,693.93
Indiana	533.18	79.41	612.59	478.33	5,730.62
Kansas	.00	54.80	54.80	.00	578.27
Kentucky	.00	222.46	222.46	.00	3,734.52
Louisiana	.00	.00	.00	.00	900.00
Maryland	.00	.00	.00	150.00	3,731.54
Michigan	15,448.22	2,388.96	17,837.18	4,824.78	106,511.82
Mississippi	.00	832.44	832.44	38.04	4,502.00
Missouri	12,850.72	.00	12,850.72	7,430.65	102,417.43
Montana	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
New Jersey	.00	.00	.00	.00	30.00
New Mexico	.00	.00	.00	71.60	184.54
North Carolina	1,267.75	550.00	1,817.75	300.00	15,273.06
Ohio	338.02	2,924.00	3,262.02	2,922.00	27,377.00
Oklahoma	42,342.25	.00	42,342.25	33,247.62	399,475.02
South Carolina	20,487.10	97.02	20,584.12	13,547.38	156,931.11
Tennessee	6,547.46	637.47	7,184.93	15,934.36	76,433.34
Texas	7,560.38	313.35	7,873.73	.00	64,177.99
Virginia	520.08	50.00	570.08	.00	3,275.79
West Virginia	3,154.17	214.37	3,368.54	.00	38,468.17
Canada	.00	.00	.00	.00	80.51
Northwest Assoc.	.00	11.88	11.88	31.70	275.52
Other (Computer)	.00	.00	.00	.01	.07
Totals	\$116,287.03	\$12,667.67	\$128,954.70	\$96,983.03	\$1,264,740.56

DISBURSEMENTS:

Executive Office	\$ 12,655.42	\$ 12,667.67	\$ 25,323.09	\$21,621.28	\$ 227,907.82
Foreign Missions	61,914.61	.00	61,914.61	41,988.45	636,855.53
FWBBC	5,982.24	.00	5,982.24	5,398.85	67,791.57
Home Missions	25,681.51	.00	25,681.51	13,602.98	213,749.53
Retirement & Insurance	1,718.96	.00	1,718.96	1,007.00	18,989.32
Master's Men	1,816.37	.00	1,816.37	1,134.00	19,276.83
Commission for					
Theo. Integrity	138.43	.00	138.43	44.78	1,041.01
FWB Foundation	971.98	.00	971.98	616.08	11,100.03
Historical Commission	133.03	.00	133.03	42.45	1,006.18
Music Commission	125.90	.00	125.90	33.54	850.59
Radio & TV Commission	125.90	.00	125.90	111.79	936.59
Hillsdale FWB College	2,075.01	.00	2,075.01	322.56	10,895.16
Other	2,947.67	.00	2,947.67	11,059.27	54,340.40
Totals	\$116,287.03	\$12,667.67	\$128,954.70	\$96,983.03	\$1,264,740.56

Pastor Appreciation Day at **First FWB Church** in **Moore, OK**, ended with Pastor **Dan Farmer** a happy man. The church presented him and his wife with a wreath covered with money, a plaque inscribed with appreciation for 20 years of service at the church, an album filled with cards and letters of appreciation.

Missouri's Northeast Association honored Reverend **Archie Cooper** for 57 years of faithful service. Ordained in 1937, Cooper has conducted more than 2,600 funerals, 900 weddings and for 35 years had a six-day-a-week radio broadcast in Kirksville. The Kirksville newspaper carried a full page ad in honor of Brother Cooper. Mayor Tom Duden presented a resolution from the Kirksville City Council in recognition of Cooper's accomplishments.

A Christian radio station in **New Bern, NC**, provides a 15-minute broadcast opportunity each day to Pastor **Dennis Wiggs** at **Ruth's Chapel FWB Church**. Wiggs said that although he is not required to pay for the radio time, he feels obligated to pray in at least \$400 a month to sustain the broadcast.

Pastor **Curtis Booth** reports 18 conversions, three baptisms and 15 new members at **Gahanna FWB Church** in **Gahanna, OH**.

Members of **Puritan FWB Church** in **Hamden, OH**, voted to raise their giving to the Cooperative Program from 4% to 10% each month. **David McKnight** pastors.

The 1993 **Ohio Ministers/Laymen Retreat** will feature FWB Executive Secretary **Melvin Worthington** and Tennessee pastor **Larry Powell** as speakers. The three-day event meets January 21-23 at **Big Prairie, OH**.

Funeral services were conducted July 18 for Rev. **Arnold Moore** at **Woodstock FWB Church** in **Woodstock, OH**. Brother Moore, 64, was ordained as a Free Will Baptist minister in 1956. He pastored four churches in Ohio during his ministry. He had served as promotional secretary and moderator of Ohio's Central Conference.

Happy Birthday to *The Nor'wester*, publication of the **Northwestern Association** of Free Will Baptists. The first edition appeared in November 1962.

This meant that the *Nor'wester* came into existence two months before the Northwest Association was organized in January 1963. Joan Hurst served as the first editor. Betty Plunkett is the current editor.

The boys and girls at **Union Grove FWB Church** near **Atkins, AR**, challenged each other to see who could give the most to missions during their Vacation Bible School activities. The mission offering was to be taken in pounds of money. The girls gave just over 101 pounds of offering money while the boys collected 77 pounds. Pastor **David Bishop** said this translated to about \$398.

Members of **Grace FWB Church** at **McGehee, AR**, conducted Victory Day and homecoming services according to Pastor **Sonny Royce**. The church celebrated becoming debt-free in 1992 after 1982 and 1985 construction projects. The church was organized in 1977 with 12 members.

Contact welcomes **Pastoral Call**, publication of **Skiatook FWB Church**, **Skiatook, OK**. **Robert Hidde** pastors.

Pastor **Kenneth Cash** celebrated 15 years as minister at **Una FWB Church** in **Una, SC**. The church did not let the occasion go unnoticed. They gave the pastor a food pounding totaling more than \$500, a \$50 weekly increase in salary and a three-week annual vacation.

Somebody loves Pastor **Belton Laws**. Members of **Hope FWB Church**, **Spartanburg, SC**, gave their pastor the keys to a new 1992 Chevrolet Lumina. Brother Laws has served the church 16 years.

Pastor **Tony Hargett** said members of **Cornerstone FWB Church** in **Whiteville, NC**, are involved in a building program. The new facility will be located several miles from their current location and include a 4,400-square-foot building to house a sanctuary, four classrooms, church office and other space.

First FWB Church in **Seminole, OK**, celebrated their 45th anniversary. **Allen Wood** pastors.

Pastor **Jerry Copeland** reports 10 new members at **Way of the Cross FWB Church** in **Sallisaw, OK**.

Reverend **Delbert Akin** has reopened the church at **Wolf, OK**. At press time the group was averaging 25

in Sunday services. They have joined the **First Oklahoma Association**.

Pastor **Steve Harris** must be a happy man. Since coming to **First FWB Church** in **Holdenville, OK**, he has baptized 61 converts, installed a new sound system and led the congregation in several remodeling projects.

West Virginia promotional director, **Ottis Hensley**, reports 26 ministers and a large number of deacons present at the August Bible Conference which met at **Sand Lick FWB Church** in **Bruno, WV**. Four West Virginia ministers preached during the two-day conference. They included **Joe Lane**, **Michael Browning**, **Carl Vallance** and state moderator, **J. L. Varney**.

Pastor **Larry Cook** baptized eight converts at **Bear Point FWB Church** in **Sesser, IL**.

After a fire destroyed **Rock Springs FWB Church** in **Thebes, IL**, Pastor **Robert Feezor** said, "We've learned that it's the people who make the church, not the building." For four weeks the congregation met in the shade of a 100-year-old barn. Lawn chairs and boards replaced pews. A guitar replaced the piano. A dirt floor replaced the carpet.

Pastor **Richard Cordell** reports nine conversions one Sunday at **First FWB Church** in **Guin, AL**.

Joe Haas, Jr. has been named executive director of the **North Carolina Christian School Association**. For the past 17 years Haas has served as a Christian school administrator—the last nine at **Goldsboro** with the **Faith Christian Academy**. In his new position he will oversee 70 schools with approximately 13,000 students in North Carolina.

Members of **Fulton FWB Church** in **Fulton, MS**, voted to raise \$1,000 to help retire the indebtedness on the national offices building. **Bill VanWinkle** pastors.

Members of **First FWB Church** in **Glasgow, KY**, purchased a grand piano to assist in their music program. The group also purchased a computer and furniture for the pastor's study. **Wade C. Parker** pastors.

Contact welcomes the church newsletter from **First FWB Church** in **Tecumseh, OK**. **Roger Ballard** pastors. ■

FOREIGN MISSIONS

*Never in a Hundred Years!*

By Vicki Sturgill

"Never in a hundred years will they finish that church building." From deep down in a hole, the tired pastor could hear the words of those passing on the sidewalk above.

As he leaned on his shovel to rest, the pastor was amazed that he could recognize the descending voices. But he knew the two elderly gentlemen, for they passed by every day and extended the usual Brazilian greeting. Many times the pastor had stopped his work to talk to them. On this occasion, he was down so deep they didn't even know he was around. But their words, "never in a hundred years," still ring in his ears today.

The digging could wait a while. The pastor had some praying to do. So, with his eyes lifted to heaven, he prayed, "Lord, let them live to see the day that we have the first service in this new building." And with more determination than ever, he resumed his labor.

Months passed! Even years! Nine of them, in fact. Sometimes it seemed the words of those men would prove true. The construction continued only as funds and workers were available. Sometimes neither was available, and things were stopped temporarily. Three of the men who started the building went to meet their Heavenly Father during those nine years. But some of their children grew up and took their place on the construction.

Taking Shape

Through it all, the faith of the congregation grew, and as it did, more work was done. Eventually the roof was in place, then the window frames and the glass. At last observers could tell what the building was going to look like.

Finally, on December 20, 1990, the members of the First Free Will Baptist Church of Campinas held their first service in the new building. It was a time of tears and great rejoicing. And, while finishing touches are still being made, all regular services are now held in the new building.

Unfortunately, one of the two men who passed on the street nine years earlier has



Early stages of construction progressed slowly.



Today the Campinas church stands in contradiction to skeptics' predictions.

passed away. According to all indications, he never accepted Christ as his Savior.

Still Unbelieving

The other gentleman still passes the church almost daily as he goes to buy bread, but his steps are slow. He also drags one foot, which was paralyzed by a stroke. If he sees no one around the church, he walks slowly by, shaking his head in disbelief as he looks up at the huge structure which he had said would never be finished in a hundred years.

If he sees anyone outside the building, the old man seems to quicken his pace, and he ignores the call of those who would tell him of the Christ who made all of this possible. Sadly, he has chosen to remain blind to the saving grace of Jesus Christ.

One hundred years! It appeared excessively lengthy for church construction, and thank God, He had other plans. But one hundred years will seem extremely short compared to an eternity without Christ! ■

Missionary Vicki Sturgill currently serves with her husband, Jim, in Jaboticabal, Brazil. They spearheaded the Campinas construction.



WOMAN'S AUXILIARY

Woman's Window on the World

From My Window

Christmas is coming, and I'm making my gift list.

Jill—a book

Jenny—a doll

Jim—a tie

What about Jesus? It's His birthday we're celebrating.

What is a fitting gift for One who owns the cattle on a thousand hills, the silver and the gold? What gift do I give One who has everything?

The Bible offers some suggestions for my list.

A broken, contrite heart—acceptable sacrifice (Psalm 51:16-17).

My body—a living sacrifice (Romans 12:1).

The fruit of my lips—praise and thanks to His name (Heb. 13:15).

My possessions—a cheerful giver, gladly sharing (II Cor. 9:7; Eph. 4:28).

A cup of cold water—counted as a gift to Him (Matt. 25:40; 10:42).

My prayers—sweet incense (Rev. 5:8).

The list could go on, but I'll stop there. Maybe some of these suggestions will remind us of gifts we haven't given or need to give anew. Keep the list at hand. They're suitable gifts for any season.

Give a Special Gift

The *Co-Laborer* magazine makes an attractive and long-lasting gift for the women on your list. The subscription price for all six issues is \$5.75 for single subscriptions or \$5 each for bundles of 5 or more magazines sent to one address.

Order from WNAC, P. O. Box 5002, Antioch, TN 37011-5002. The office will send notice of your gift to the recipient.

Executive Committee Meets

Mary Neal, Delois Loveless, Jo Ann Wood (officers of WNAC), and Everyl Getz, Gwen Hendrix and Pam Wood (members at large of the Executive Committee), met in December to adopt a budget and plan for the convention in 1993.

The Study Committee and the Executive Committee met together on Monday, December 6, to evaluate suggested changes for presentation at the convention in July 1993.

Books Closing for 1992

WNAC will close the books for the year December 31.

Your gifts are desperately needed to help the national office finish the year financially.

Some Auxiliaries have responded to the resolution calling for \$10 a month. If your Auxiliary has not responded, please consider a year-end gift to the general fund of WNAC.

State treasurers, make sure your December report gets to the WNAC office before the end of the year. ■

Congratulations
to
Lorene Miley
on her retirement
as *Co-Laborer*
Editor

Welcome
to
Melissa Riddle
as the new
Co-Laborer Editor



BOARD OF RETIREMENT

The Forgotten Truth

"I don't know why God has let me live so long," we often hear elderly Christians remark.

The writer of Psalm 92 knew why. As living memorials, he sang, their presence declares the Lord is upright and faithful. Those planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish and bring forth fruit in old age. By their testimony of what they have seen and heard they proclaim God's love and His lovingkindness.

The Christmas season offers a golden opportunity to teach this neglected truth. Plan to emphasize this truth in your services and programs. Here are six suggestions of worship, instruction, evangelism and ministering it offers.

1. A thanksgiving and praise offering to God for the lives of the aging and elderly. How often we forget to show appreciation for those who served so faithfully in past years. Ask members including youth and children to give brief testimonies of appreciation for what older persons mean to them.

2. A witness to unbelievers. Ask older members to share their conversion experience. Unbelievers need to hear firsthand of forgiveness, salvation and a changed life. It oftentimes helps an unsaved person to understand better what is happening in his life as the Holy Spirit convicts and draws him.

3. Instruction for adults sorting out plans for retirement years. They need to hear God's purpose for retirement years. They need to seek God's guidance and commit themselves to fulfill His will in their older years.

4. Encouragement for the disabled and displaced. Ask them to share their testimony. As they share their experience, they themselves understand more clearly God's work in their lives. Sharing their troubles, heartaches, God's love and His mercy renews their own faith as well as that of those who hear. It reminds the church to draw closer to the hurting with love and understanding.

5. A lesson for the young. Ask the young people to prepare and present a drama of an older pastor's life. Interviewing the older pastor they learn how God calls and works in a life dedicated to God. Use the drama to challenge young people to dedicate their lives to full-time Christian service.

6. A time of rededication for the older adults. Reminiscence is good for older people. Looking back to the battles and the victories, the good times, the not so good times, and the reality of God's faithfulness renews their faith. It reminds them to rejoice in life and to fulfill their present ministry. ■

In Memory Of . . .

By . . .

Fred Bettis

Sciotodale Woman's Auxiliary
Sciotoville, OH

Charles Allen Carpentier

Frank and Myrna Carpentier
Oklahoma City, OK

Wayne Largent

Danny and Jan Bastings
Carthage, MO

In Honor Of . . .

By . . .

Roger Russell

New Salem Woman's Auxiliary
Colquitt, GA

Cinda Thompson

Wilson Chapel Woman's Auxiliary
Wise, VA

Gregory's Sermon Synopses

By Joel C. Gregory

(Nashville: Broadman Press, 1991, 276 pp., paperback, \$11.95)



Thomas Marberry

Dr. Joel Gregory, pastor of First Baptist Church in Dallas, Texas, is recognized as one of the outstanding preachers in our country today. This volume includes synopses of 200 sermons which he preached to his congregation over a five-year period. Many of the sermons were preached when Dr. Gregory was pastor of Travis Avenue Baptist Church in Fort Worth.

A sermon synopsis is more than an outline but less than a full manuscript. A synopsis gives the reader a good understanding of how the preacher interprets and analyses his sermon text. A simple outline could never do this. A synopsis does not include, however, the illustrations and applications which were added before the sermon was actually preached.

The single most outstanding fea-

ture of these sermons is Gregory's ability to isolate the key ideas presented in biblical text and then make those key ideas live in the hearts, minds and imaginations of the hearers. The author demonstrates a unique ability to bring together an ancient text and a modern congregation.

Dr. Gregory argues that effective sermons grow out of a careful study and analysis of the biblical text. Indeed, in the sermons in this volume both the major points and the subpoints come directly out of the text. In the view of this author, the text should provide far more than just the main idea or key word of the sermon. The entire sermon should be developed out of the text.

In these sermons, the major divisions are always stated in the present tense because the teachings of scripture are timeless. The Bible is more

than just a book of history; it is the Word of God to man today.

This is not a book on how to preach, but it does illustrate the kind of expository preaching which is being done today by some of the country's outstanding preachers. Dr. Gregory has done a great service to preachers in publishing it.

I see two primary benefits in this volume for those of us who preach the Word. First, it can help to nourish our own needy souls. Sermons should be a spiritual benefit to the people of God, and they should benefit the preacher first of all.

Second, these synopses can assist a preacher in developing his own expository sermons. The sermons in this volume are not the final word. They can, however, help to stimulate and guide the preacher in his own sermon development. ■

OUR READERS COMMENT

Minister Cautions Against "Nine to Noon"

I have been concerned about articles in the last two issues of *Contact* that seem to support the idea of dismissing our church's Sunday night worship service in favor of a more extended Sunday morning service. The article I refer to in the September issue is "Pastor Likes Nine to Noon."

Now, I don't suppose that there is anything in scripture that says we have services on Sunday morning, Sunday night and Wednesday. However, I think this has been one of the distinctives of the fundamental church that has separated us from the more liberal groups for a number of years. And it really does concern me that Free Will Baptist churches are cutting out Sunday School in some areas and Sunday night service in other

areas. One can only wonder how such cutting away will affect the church in the future.

I remember several years ago that a fellow pastor called me and said, "Brother Skiles, our deacons voted to discontinue our Wednesday night prayer meeting. What do you think?"

I replied, "Your deacons have no authority nor business dismissing any of the services of the church. That's the pastor's responsibility. And, if you allow this to happen, it won't be long until they will be voting to dismiss the Sunday night service."

Sure enough, it wasn't long until they did vote to dismiss the Sunday night service. Today, that church is closed. They have no services at all.

I suppose there is something to be said here about the autonomy of the local church. And it certainly is not my idea to try to tell some other pastor or church how to run their business. However, since *Contact* is our national magazine, people will be influenced by what they read therein.

By the way, I believe the best "quality time" a pastor or anyone else can spend with their family on Sunday night is in the worship service of the local church.

Reverend Dale Skiles, Treasurer
Home Missions Board
Missouri State Association
of Free Will Baptists

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January - December 1992

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Laymen: Priests of God	February, 25
More than Spectators; James Vallance	October, 27

RANDALL HOUSE

Letters from the Fields; Lucy Hyman	January, 27
Where Everyone's a Winner!	March, 26
Be a Sunday School Hero; Billy Brown	May, 25
Recovery; Roger Reeds	September, 29
Helping Single Parents: A Grandparent's Perspective; Delbert Wood with Billy Brown	November, 28

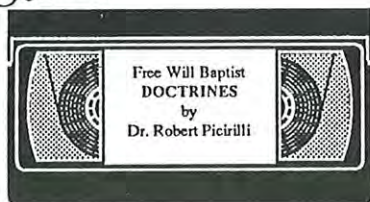
RETIREMENT AND INSURANCE

The Free Will Baptist Retirement Plan	February, 23
Reckoning with Retirement; Melvin Worthington	April, 27
Honoring Fathers . . . ; Ray Lewis	June, 26
Power of Compounding, The; William Evans	August, 27
Remember . . . ; Bill Evans	October, 25
The Forgotten Truth	December, 23

WOMAN'S NATIONAL AUXILIARY CONVENTION

Woman's Window on the World; Mary R. Wisheart	February, 26
Woman's Window on the World; Mary R. Wisheart	April, 26
Woman's Window on the World; Mary R. Wisheart	June, 25
Woman's Window on the World; Mary R. Wisheart	August, 26
Woman's Window on the World; Mary R. Wisheart	October, 28
Woman's Window on the World; Mary R. Wisheart	December, 22

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NEWSFRONT

Churches

Alabama	
Eastside FWB Church,	
Dothan	August, 19
South Highland FWB Church,	
Muscle Shoals	August, 21
Arkansas	
First FWB Church,	
Charleston	January, 21
California	
Turlock FWB Church, Turlock	July, 24
Florida	
Ryanwood Fellowship FWB Church,	
Vero Beach	September, 23
Idaho	
First FWB Church, Rupert	July, 21
Illinois	
Rock Springs FWB Church,	
Thebes	August, 19
Indiana	
Bethel Chapel FWB Church,	
Fort Wayne	July, 22
Peace FWB Church,	
Indianapolis	December, 16
Kansas	
First FWB Church,	
Topeka	December, 18
Kentucky	
Northside FWB Church,	
Bowling Green	January, 21
Missouri	
First FWB Church,	
Cape Girardeau	May, 20
First FWB Church, Monett	December, 17
Oklahoma	
Blue Bell FWB Church, Sapulpa	July, 23
South Carolina	
Bethany FWB Church,	
Timmonsville	October, 23
Tennessee	
Cookeville FWB Church,	
Cookeville	June, 22
Donelson FWB Church,	
Nashville	January, 20
Pardue Memorial FWB Church,	
Clarksville	June, 23

Ministers

Evans, Calvin	August, 22
Gann, Milton	October, 22
Gibson, Luther D.	July, 22
Hall, Jr., John	July, 23
Horton, Lester	October, 22
Kirkland, Zane	June, 23
Russ, Chad	December, 19
Sparks, Paul	July, 21

Thomas, Rue	October, 21
Woodlief, Arnold	November, 23

Lay People

Barnard, Laura Belle	June, 21
Foster, Bill	August, 20
Fry, Mae	December, 17
Messer, Gary	July, 24

Alabama	March, 21
Arizona	July, 24
Arkansas	November, 22
California	August, 22; November, 23
Canada	September, 21
Florida	February, 17; August, 21
Illinois	June, 22
Indiana	September, 20
Kentucky	September, 24
Missouri	September, 20, 21, 22
New Mexico	July, 24
North Carolina	September, 23
Northwest	September, 21
Ohio	September, 23
Oklahoma	January, 20; April, 17; November, 24
South Carolina	May, 21
Tennessee	February, 20
Texas	March, 19; October, 21
Virginia	September, 21
West Virginia	September, 22

National Ministries

All-Boards Conference Set for December	November, 23
Bible College to Pursue Regional Accreditation	March, 20
Bible Conference to Celebrate 50 Years	February, 17
Calling All Singers, Instrumentalists	April, 17; May, 21; June, 23
Capital Stewardship Campaign Update	April, 20
College Unveils Official Portrait	December, 18
Contact Now In-House	February, 20
Correction and Update	October, 23
Discount Air Fares to National Convention	Available April, 17; May, 20; June, 21
Eight Teams Invited to FWBCC Tournament	January, 22
42 Complete FWBCC Programs	August, 23
FWBCC Enrollment Up 7 Percent	November, 22
FWBCC Launches Tape Ministry	December, 18
FWBCC Offers Five New Video Series	November, 24
FWBCC Opens Computer Lab	March, 21

FWBCC Seniors Listed in "Who's Who"	January, 22
Hillsdale Wins FWB Classic	March, 20
Historic International Consultation	
Meets in Panama	November, 21
Kentucky Steering Committee	
Meets in Louisville	November, 24
Leaders Dedicate National Offices Building	February, 18
Leadership Conference Recommends	
Finance Committee	February, 19
Murfreesboro Road Property Sold	August, 19
1992 State Association Meetings	February, 21
176 Attend FWBCC Welcome Days	January, 21
Softball Tourney Set	May, 21
Two Teachers to Leave Bible College	February, 20
Whaley, Carraway Join FWBCC Music Faculty	August, 20
WNAC Retreat Attracts 640 Women	December, 16
Yearbook Late to Press	May, 21

Other

Area Crusade	March, 19
Children's Home Full	March, 21
Cumberland Assoc. Sets Retreat	August, 20
Fellowship of FWB Christian Schools	April, 18
FWBCC Student Joins AIA Team	July, 23
Jamaican Crusade	May, 20
S.E. Begins 10th Year	August, 21
S.E. College Sets Graduation	April, 18
S.E. Enrolls 160	November, 23
S.E. Sets Missionary Conference	October, 23
S.E. Spring Revival	January, 21
School Seeks Administrator	January, 22
Upper Cumberland Churches Set Crusade	November, 23

**Season's
Greetings
from
the
Contact
Staff**

RELIGIOUS COMMUNITY NEWS

'Baby Busters' Break 'Boomer' Mold

GLENDAL, CA (EP)—Much has been said, written and studied about the largest generation in the nation's history, born during the "Baby Boom" years after the second World War (1946 to 1964). Boomers make up almost 32 percent of America's population; a total of 79 million people.

With all of the attention given to Boomers, however, the generation following Boomers—commonly known as the Baby Bust—has been virtually ignored. Busters, born between the years of 1965 and 1983, are the second biggest American generation in history, accounting for almost 68 million people, or 27 percent of the current population.

A new study shows dramatic differences between Baby Boomers and Baby Busters in terms of attitudes, perspectives and actions. This study is reported in *The Invisible Generation: Baby Busters*, the product of extensive research by the Barna Research Group.

The Invisible Generation underscores differences between Busters and Boomers. One of the primary contributors to these differences is that America's social fabric has undergone continual radical changes since the 1960's. While the Boomers were often the people facilitating these changes, and choosing what things would change, the Busters were the first generation raised from birth in the "new" America (featuring working mothers, non-traditional values, liberalized cultural mores and expectations, and broken homes). Things have been changed for them, instead of by them. Therefore, their perspectives are often a reaction to their surroundings, instead of an impact on their surroundings.

A case in point is that 38 percent of all adult Busters called themselves "stressed out"—a proportion which was nearly double the percentage of older adults who describe themselves in this manner.

Another example is data showing that Boomers place considerably more value on work and on "getting ahead" than do Busters, while Busters are more concerned with their leisure time and their friendships than are Boomers.

Other significant differences the study discovered included the following:

—While a majority of Busters claim to be patriotic, the proportion is considerably lower than among any other generation. Busters are also more skeptical about institutions and traditions; they've seen too many scandals in government, sports and entertainment, business, and organized religion to believe what they're told just because someone else claims it to be true.

—Busters demonstrate considerably less loyalty than do Boomers or other generations. They are less loyal to brands and

products, which frustrates marketers. This even extends to their religious involvement. Busters are much less loyal to their church, denomination and particular religious beliefs than other generations tend to be. Only half of the Busters who attend church said they attend the same church each time they go.

—Along the lines of religion, Busters' religious involvement is drastically lower than it is for other age groups. Busters are 30 percent less likely to attend church in a given week than are other generations, and 50 percent less likely to attend any religious instruction efforts such as Sunday School. Busters were more likely to go to a movie than to attend church; more likely to read other books than to read the Bible, and more likely to pay tuition to attend a class at an educational institution than to attend a free Sunday School.

Gallup Reports on Spiritual Needs

NEW YORK, NY (EP)—Some 70 percent of Americans believe that "most churches and synagogues today are not effective in helping people find meaning in life," George H. Gallup Jr., America's leading pollster and a committed Christian, reports in the *1992 Yearbook of American and Canadian Churches*.

Gallup believes the vitality of churches, synagogues and faith communities depends very much on how effectively they respond to six spiritual needs of Americans as he perceives them from his surveys.

They are listed as: the need to believe that life is meaningful and has a purpose; the need for a sense of community and deeper relationships; the need to be appreciated and respected; to be listened to and heard; to feel that one is growing in the faith; and the need for practical help in developing a mature faith.

"There is an urgent need to work to close the gap between belief and practice—to turn professed faith into lived-out faith," Gallup concludes. And he pleads for the church to deepen the faith of parishioners, to prepare and equip them so they can be effective in evangelistic and outreach efforts.

Directory Update

GEORGIA

Walter Baxley to Mt. Gilead Church, Bainbridge from Cedar Springs Church, Cedar Springs

William Smith to Cedar Springs Church, Cedar Springs from Colquitt Church, Colquitt
David Griffin to Alabaha Church, Black-shear

OKLAHOMA

DeArthur Yandell to Non Church, Calvin
Roger Woodson to Elk City Church, Elk City

Richard Callison to Salina Church, Salina
Chris Clay to Pleasant Hill Church, Norman
Troy Dobbs to First Church, Idabel from First Church, Wichita, KS

SOUTH CAROLINA

Rex Evans to Calvary Church, Georgetown

TENNESSEE

Larry Martindale to Madison Church, Madison

OTHER PERSONNEL

Joel Hampton to Peace Church, Granite City, IL, as youth pastor

Randy Shrum to Bethel Christian Academy, South Roxana, IL, as principal

Joey Wilson to First Church, Albany, GA, as youth minister

James Wilhide to FWB Children's Home, Turbeville, SC, as superintendent ■



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Jack Williams

Guess Who Came to Christmas

They sent His birth announcements to strangers who did not know His parents. Born 90 miles from home in a stable, He was three years old before His parents took Him home. And when they did they detoured through a foreign country because He was hounded by a madman. A trail of blood followed Him from Bethlehem to Egypt to Nazareth and finally to Golgotha.

After His birth, the government murdered every child in the city who was near His age in an effort to kill Him (Mt. 2:16-18). A king feared for his throne (v. 3). A city shuddered at the mention of His birth (v. 3). Only nameless shepherds and a few unknown wise men sought to worship Him; the rest tried to kill Him.

No, it was not the Child in the manger that the authorities feared so much as the Man the Child might become. If Herod could have kept Christ in the cradle, there would have been no confrontation. Men go to great lengths to keep Christ in the cradle, for there He is no threat. But as Herod knew, the Child would grow and become a Man with ideas and words and dreams.

Herod was right. The Child was dangerous. History has proven him correct that the Child born King of the Jews would dethrone him and upend the world system. So sing the Christmas carols this year, but remember — before there can be “peace on earth, good will to men,” the Christmas Child must live a sinless life, die a vicarious death, rise on the third day, ascend to Heaven and promise to return.

The Christmas story is incomplete if Christ remains in the manger. The Christmas truth is a lie if adoring shepherds and gift-bear-

ing magi do not give way to angry Pharisees and a sword-wielding mob. The Christmas song has not been sung until “Away in a Manger” becomes “Were You There When They Crucified My Lord?” Christmas cheer is a mockery until He shouts, “It is finished!”

The Child of Bethlehem must give way to the Man of Sorrows. The secret flight to Egypt must find its end in the darkness at Gethsemane. The full manger must become an empty tomb. Mary and Joseph must be replaced by Caiaphas and Pilate. The gold, frankincense and myrrh must give way to a harlot’s tears, the death of Lazarus and 30 pieces of silver.

The Child’s first cry for His mother’s milk must change to the Man’s heart-wrenching groan, “My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?” Bethlehem’s star must vanish to become Jerusalem’s crown of thorns. The swaddling clothes must be snatched away by soldiers and the Child/Man lashed and beaten until no man knows Him. The Child who “must be about my Father’s business” must become the Man who interferes with every man’s business.

His dedication in the Temple 40 days after His birth must change to His ascension into Heaven 40 days after His resurrection. The Child’s eyes that opened for the first time on a loving mother must at last see men broken and crushed by sin. The contented Child’s gurgle of pleasure must become the Man’s haunting prophecy, “Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.”

Hands that touched a young mother’s wide-eyed face must be torn by nails. Feet cushioned by manger straw must feel Roman nails. The stable must forever remain in

the shadow of the cross.

Events that fulfill Old Testament scripture must give way to events that create New Testament scripture. The birth cries of a Child must change to the birth cries of a Church. Great minds that focus on Jerusalem and Nazareth must re-focus on ship schedules to Rome, a preaching itinerary in Ephesus, a reformation in Germany, a revival in Wales, a ship called *Mayflower* sailing to the New World.

The Christmas season has come again. As it was that first long-ago Christmas, most people are still too busy to make room for the Child who came to Christmas and changed the world. Most still prefer the legend of Christmas to the Lord of Christmas.

And yet, there is glory and beauty in the star, the shepherds and the Babe. Sadly, that’s all most people will ever know . . . and they’ll misunderstand the biggest part of that.

But it can be different this year. Love the Child, knowing that He came to die. Enjoy the star, knowing that its light not only brings wise men to worship but angry men to kill.

As long as we keep the Child in the manger, the tomb cannot be empty. Without the empty tomb, the manger holds just another child. But with it the manger catapults the Savior of the world among us as one of us.

That’s why the star appeared. That’s why the shepherds left their sheep and the wise men their homes. That’s why the angels sang. And that’s Who came to Christmas. ■

CONTACT

P. O. Box 5002

Antioch, Tennessee 37011-5002

Second class postage paid at Antioch, Tennessee, and additional offices.

1992 Paul Ketteman Memorial Christmas Fund Drive



Paul Ketteman

Link Up With The Denomination

In July, the National Association voted to designate four months each year for special denomination-wide appeals by national ministries. The plan is called the Together Way. December is the month when all churches and individuals are encouraged to support FWBBC's Christmas Drive. A good response will help reduce the number of appeals through the year.

Link up with the denomination by supporting the Paul Ketteman Christmas Fund Drive in December!

Victory Goal: \$250,000
Hallelujah! Goal: \$300,000



Any gift sent to the college in December will be counted toward the Paul Ketteman Christmas Drive goal.



Any gift sent any other month and received before January 31, 1993, marked for the Christmas Drive will be counted.



Send your gift to:

Paul Ketteman Memorial Christmas Drive
Free Will Baptist Bible College
3606 West End Avenue
Nashville, Tennessee 37205

