

DECEMBER 1993

# CONTACT

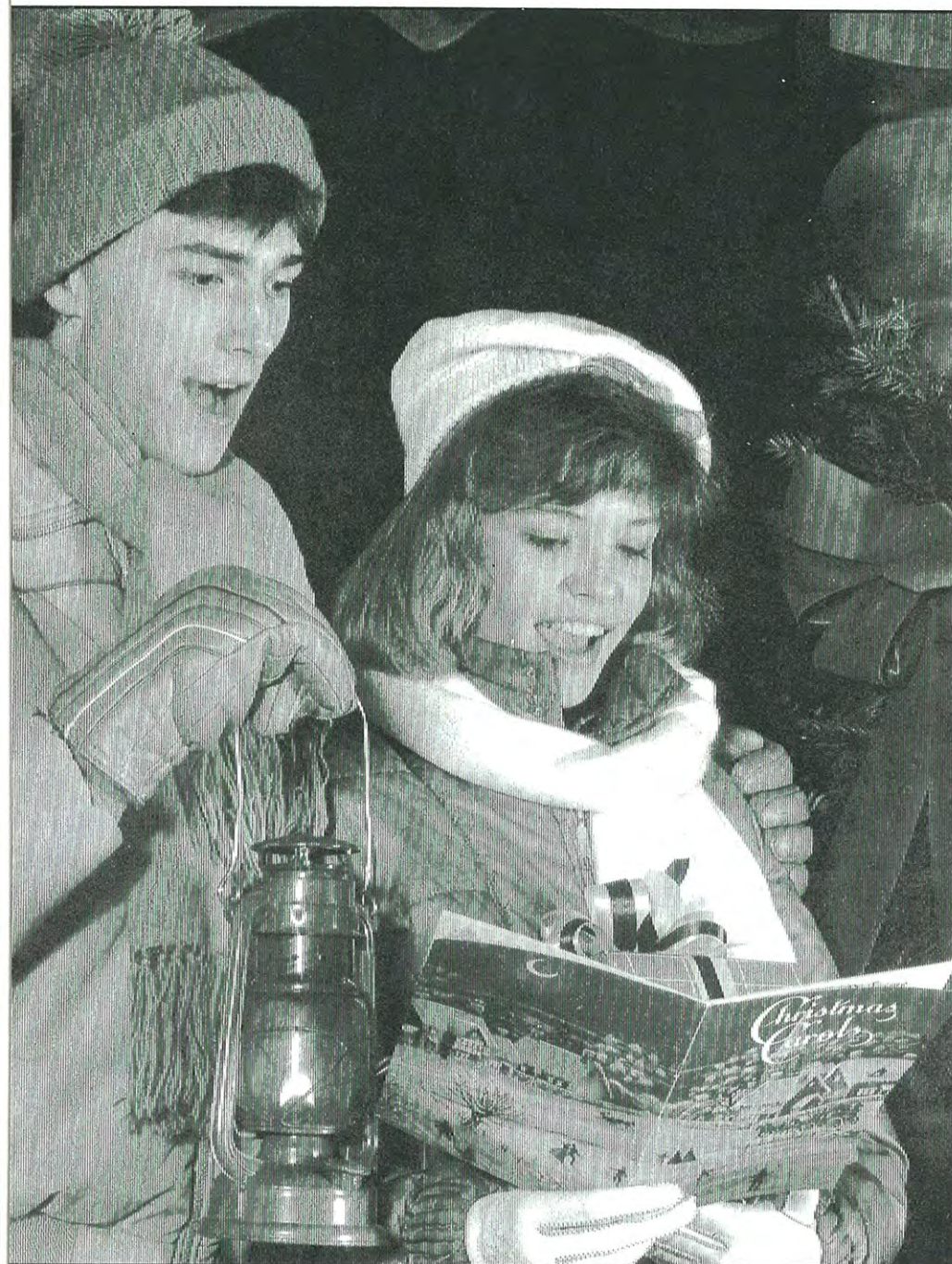
OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE  
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FREE WILL BAPTISTS

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Who Owns  
Christmas?

.....  
Money-Saving Tips

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Shotgun Christmas

.....  
Dynamics of  
Forgiveness





# INSIDE

DECEMBER 1993

VOLUME 40, NO. 12

## ARTICLES

- 4 Who Owns Christmas?**  
Christmas belongs to the pure in heart, the obedient, the spiritually hungry.
- 6 Money-Saving Tips for Christmas**  
Twelve practical ways to get Christmas spending under control.
- 8 Shotgun Christmas**  
He learned why people are more important than things.
- 9 Christmas and the Lord's Prayer**
- 10 The North Star of Life**  
We can do better than drift aimlessly to the grave.
- 11 The Dynamics of Forgiveness**  
Forgiveness gets to the root problem of our conflicts.
- 13 He Needed a Hand**  
The man did not want a hand out; he wanted answers to life.
- 14 Helping Hurting Kids**  
Five principles that open doors to troubled youth.
- 26 1993 Index**

## COLUMNS

- 3 The Secretary Speaks**  
Share the Story
- 21 The Department Pages**
- 24 Teen Scene**
- 25 Green Tree Bible Study**  
Husbands and Wives (Part 3)
- 31 Briefcase**  
Santa at the Altar

## NEWS

- 17 Free Will Baptist Newsfront**  
Jerry Presley Dies  
West Virginia Leader Dies  
Missouri Church Turns 100  
I. L. Stanley Dies  
South Carolina Pastor Dies  
J. B. Rice, Jr. Dies
- 20 Currently**

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# THE SECRETARY SPEAKS



Melvin Worthington

## Share the Story

**T**he Christmas season provides a special opportunity for Christians to share a special story. People around the world are reminded of the birth of God's Son. Great attention is given to the story of the Babe born in the manger in Bethlehem.

Cities decorate the streets. Citizens decorate their homes. Churches schedule Christmas plays to celebrate the season. Commercial businesses entice consumers to spend money buying and exchanging gifts. Often in the commercialization and celebrating, the meaning of Christmas is distorted, diluted or even denied.

Christians who would celebrate the season in a manner which honors God must share the story. Paul, in writing to Timothy, declares that the gospel had been committed to his trust. God's only begotten, eternal Son, the Messiah of the Old Testament, God's Lamb became flesh, dwelt on this earth, died, was buried and on the third day rose from the dead.

This story is God's glorious gospel. This story was committed to Paul's trust. He was given the responsibility and privilege of sharing the story, and so have Christians down through history.

### *Comprehend the Truth*

Sharing the story requires that we comprehend the truth. The Christmas story begins in eternity past. Jesus Christ was the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world as a propitiation for the sins of mankind. Adam's sin plunged the human race into sin. Christ's sacrificial, substitutionary and satisfactory death provided redemption for all mankind.

The Christmas story is a story of

redemption and reconciliation. Sinful human beings can be reconciled to a holy God, and a holy God can be reconciled to sinful human beings. The truths embedded in the Christmas story include the plight of sinners, provision for sin, power of the Savior and the passion of the Sovereign.

### *Communicate the Truth*

Sharing the story requires that we communicate the truths in the story. We must clearly and correctly share the story. The Bible abounds with illustrations of those who shared God's gospel. The truth must be told. Sinners need to be confronted with the eternal truths included in the gospel. No other season provides a greater opportunity for Christians to communicate the gospel story.

People's attention is heightened by the festivities that characterize the season. Wise Christians can effectively communicate God's good news regarding redemption, regeneration and reconciliation. We have the responsibility of articulating the truth of the gospel during the Christmas season.

### *Confirm the Truth*

Sharing the story requires that we confirm the truths in the story. The gospel is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believes. The transforming experience of regeneration produces a new creature in

Christ. The lives of those who believe the gospel will radically change. Such a change characterized the Apostle Paul.

He who once persecuted the church became a preacher of the gospel after his conversion. A transformation took place. He appealed to his manner of life as evidence that the gospel brought a radical change in him.

Paul challenged the Christians at Corinth to imitate him as he imitated Christ. Confirmation of the power of the gospel through a changed life remains one of the most effective ways to show the lost that the gospel can change them too.

### *Commitment to Truth*

Sharing the story requires a commitment to the truth in the story. We must never allow the gospel to be distorted or diluted. We must be committed to the truth in the gospel regardless of the trends of our culture. The gospel story is diametrically opposed to the world system.

Commitment to God's gospel has not, is not and will not be easy. To some, the gospel is a stumbling block. To others, it is foolishness. But to those who believe, it is the power of God unto salvation.

Accepting, articulating and advancing the gospel remains the thrust of any Christmas celebration which glorifies and honors God. This can be the best Christmas you have ever had as a believer. Join with me in using this special season to share the story. ■

### *The Secretary's Schedule*

**Dec. 6-7 Leadership Conference**  
Nashville, TN

**Dec. 8-9 Executive Committee Meeting**  
Nashville, TN



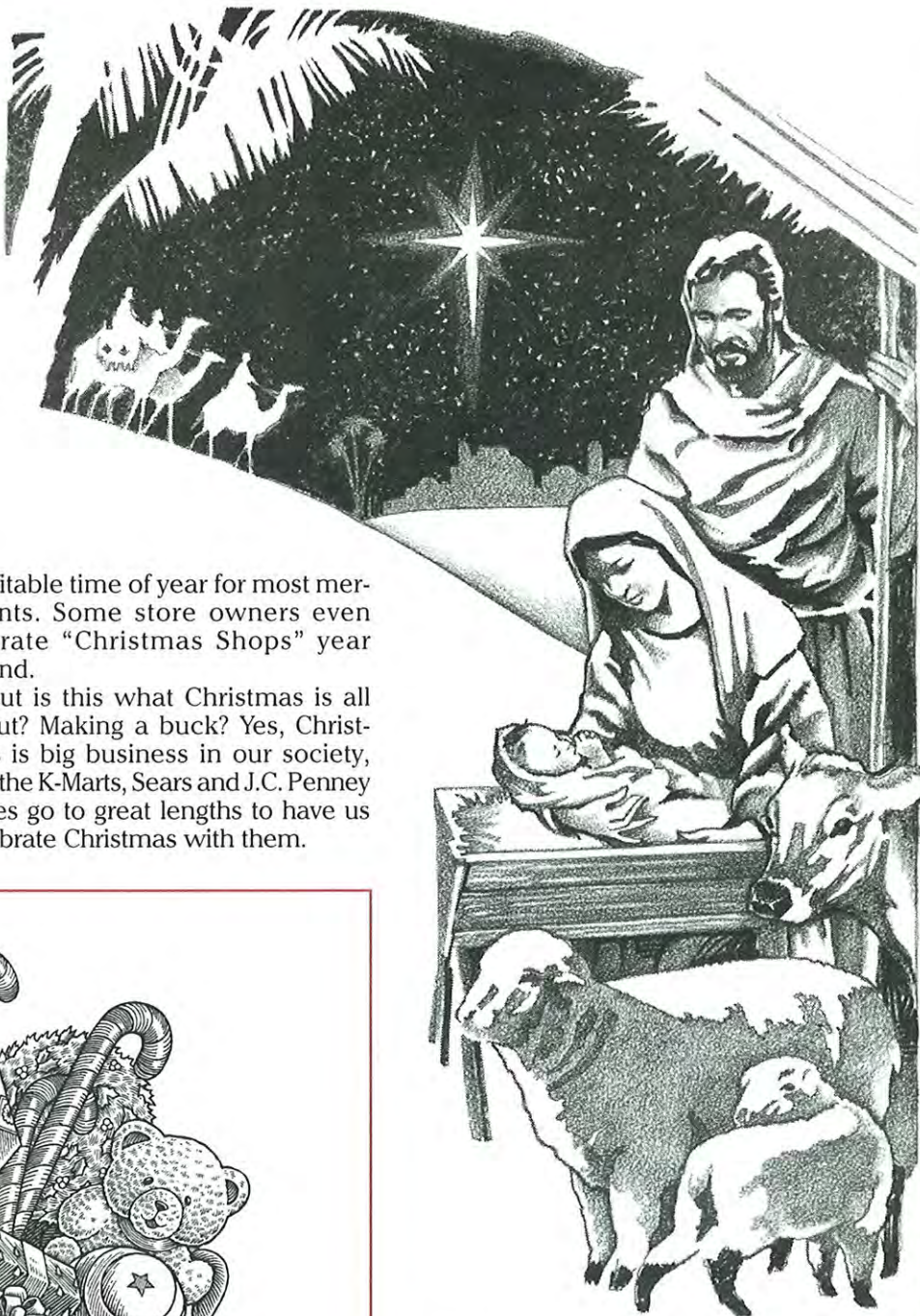
# Who Owns Christmas?

By Edwin Hayes

**T**his is a strange question, isn't it? Who could possibly own Christmas? To the casual observer, it may appear that merchants own it. After all, Christmas is the time of year when all those beautifully decorated stores sell millions of dollars of merchandise to a multitude of weary, frazzled shoppers. This is the most

profitable time of year for most merchants. Some store owners even operate "Christmas Shops" year 'round.

But is this what Christmas is all about? Making a buck? Yes, Christmas is big business in our society, and the K-Marts, Sears and J.C. Penney stores go to great lengths to have us celebrate Christmas with them.



Unfortunately, this way of celebrating Christmas is like a farmer at harvest time who keeps the husks and throws away the corn. We hold on to the shadow and turn the substance away. That's why so many of us are disappointed in the Christmas season. After a great build-up, we feel such a let-down in January. Our souls are left unsatisfied when we allow merchants to own Christmas.

If Christmas is not owned by merchants, then who does own it? If presents and parties do not give us the true meaning, then what will? We Christians are supposed to quickly reply the spiritually correct answer—the wonderful story of the birth of our Savior.



However, we are also guilty of overlooking this great truth. We know who owns the Christmas story, but we allow ourselves to get caught up in the world's view of this great event.

Let's go back 2,000 years and refresh our hearts and minds with the story of how Jesus, the Son of God, was "manifested in the flesh." The account of our Lord's birth has a marvelous effect on us by inspiring us, encouraging us and making our lives worth living. In its narrative, the question of "Who Owns Christmas?" is answered.

### ***Christmas Belongs to the Pure in Heart***

What a wonderful day it was when the angel Gabriel made a visit to the city of Nazareth. He wanted to see Mary, a young virgin there, for he had great news to tell her. The Messiah for whom all Israel looked was coming, and she would bear Him. What an honor! It must have been overwhelming for her. Mary had truly found the true meaning of Christmas.

You see, Mary was a pure vessel that God could use. She had a desire in her heart to be pure and faithful unto the Lord. I am sad to say that this virtue is not valued much today. People who do not desire purity cannot truly appreciate the Christmas message. The Christmas story belongs to people like Mary who desire the purity that comes by knowing the Christ of Christmas.

### ***Christmas Belongs to the Obedient***

Joseph was a carpenter in Nazareth who was engaged to marry the virgin Mary. He had just found out some disturbing news. Mary was going to have a child! While he was pondering the situation, the angel of the Lord came to him, calmed his fears and assured him that his espoused wife was to bring the Messiah into the world. In fact, the angel told Joseph that the Baby was to be called Jesus (Jehovah is Salvation).

Imagine how Joseph felt. Think of the emotions he must have experienced. But Joseph knew what he must do. He would simply obey the message of God and take Mary to be his wife. He would name the child

Jesus. Later he would obey the Lord's voice again by taking Jesus to Egypt, and returning Him to Nazareth when His safety was assured.

Joseph was known for his obedience. Isn't it interesting that out of all the homes in Israel, the Lord chose the carpenter's home in which to raise His Son. No doubt there were many more notable or richer homes there, but God chose Joseph's home. Truly, Christmas belongs to those who obey the Lord.

### ***Christmas Belongs to the Humble***

The night Jesus was born, the angels needed an audience to tell the great news. Where should they go, to Caesar Augustus, to the king, to the high priest? No, to none of these did the angels go; they took their message to shepherds.

Shepherds seem to have a special place in the Lord's heart. Moses, Jacob and David were all shepherds. Jesus is called the Good Shepherd. Shepherds are not among the "high and mighty" in this world. They take their place with the meek and lowly. The message of salvation was for them, for only the meek and lowly are interested in salvation.

These shepherds immediately left their sheep and went to Bethlehem to investigate. When they arrived at the manger, they were not disappointed. In fact, they were so excited they went throughout the land proclaiming the good news.

Too many people today miss the Christmas story because they are simply too "high" to see it. They need to be like the shepherds, humble and grateful for the good news. Christmas belongs to the meek and lowly.

### ***Christmas Belongs to the Spiritually Hungry***

When Jesus was born in Bethlehem, a new star appeared in the sky announcing the birth of the King. It caught the attention of some eastern wise men who decided to inquire. They had heard the prophecy and desired to see the new King of Israel. Their trip probably took them several months and hundreds of miles. When they arrived in Jerusalem, they came to King Herod to inquire about the King of the Jews.

These wise men intrigue me. These men were men of position and authority. They were also religious men. Why would they concern themselves with Israel's King? These men were hungry, hungry for something more than they had.

Their position, religion and authority were not enough. They wanted more. That is why the wise men were willing to travel hundreds of miles to see Him while Herod and the scribes were unwilling to travel five.

When they finally found Jesus, they rejoiced, they worshipped Him and gave Him their royal gifts. Then they returned to their own country both satisfied and happy.

Many today miss the true satisfaction of Christmas because there is no hunger for the Christ of Christmas. They attempt to satisfy themselves on all the glitter surrounding Christmas and end up starving spiritually. They need to learn the lesson of the wise men who would only satisfy their hunger with Christ. Christmas belongs to those who hunger for spiritual things.

These are the ones who own Christmas—people like Mary, Joseph, the shepherds and the wise men—not the Sears, K-Marts, and J.C. Penneys of the world. Those with an appreciation for purity, obedience, humility and hunger own Christmas. Are you one of the owners of Christmas? ■



ABOUT THE WRITER: Reverend Edwin Hayes pastors Columbus First Free Will Baptist Church in Columbus, Ohio. He also serves as moderator of the Ohio State Association of Free Will Baptists.





# 12 Money-Saving Tips for Christmas

By Sandra Atwood

I love Christmas, and I love to save money! No, these two statements don't have to cancel out each other. *Christmas* and *save* do go together. Here are 12 ideas I've found to help save money at Christmas.

## ***Do things that cost little or no money.***

Every Christmas our family piles

into the car and we drive around town searching for Christmas lights. We sing Christmas carols and ooh and aah. Creating traditions can be a great way to make Christmas special. You probably had traditions as a child that your children would enjoy.

—Ask another family to join you and go caroling in your neighborhood or at a

nursing home. Serve hot chocolate and cookies afterwards.

—Decorate the tree and talk of past Christmases. Some families give an appropriate ornament to remind them of the year. I take a picture of my niece every Christmas and put it in an ornament. It's fun seeing the changes.

—Read or act out the Christmas story. Sing Christmas carols.



- Serve meals as a family at a soup kitchen.
- Invite a lonely neighbor or college student over for a meal or coffee.
- Have a birthday party for Jesus complete with cake and candles.

Get ideas from your own family. Plan ahead and do it together.

### ***Giving saves money.***

Ask for God's help as you honor Him in your giving. One way to save money is to give it away. It is Jesus' birthday and we should honor Him by giving to others in need. Put Him first.

Collect the money in a jar or hang up a stocking for Jesus. Let children choose a few used toys to give to others less fortunate. Give to a missionary. Give to prisoners' children. Give to children's homes. Ask God to provide the money. Ask Him to help you spend the money wisely.

I prayed that as I pulled into a shopping center last year. Although I hadn't planned to go in a new store, I ran in just to see what they had. They were having 50% off the lowest clearance price on toys. Toys our children had wished for, I bought for a fraction of the cost.

### ***Shop smart.***

Shop at the Goodwill, Salvation Army and thrift stores. Our children have found nice toys for each other for a few dollars or less. Think of it as uncovering a treasure. Often, the very item we wanted or needed God has provided this way.

### ***Give coupons.***

Give coupons for time or a service. I love receiving coupons for a back rub, for cleaning the kitchen, for help with dinner or for the night out. (My husband says these are very expensive gifts!)

Give your child a coupon for one hour of uninterrupted time to play a game. Give your wife a coupon to repair things around the house. Give your husband a coupon for his favorite dessert. Give a coupon to run errands for a grandmother.

Give a coupon for an afternoon out to a person caring for a sick child

or aging parent. Put the coupon in a card. Wrap it up as a gift. Clip several together as a book. Roll each one up, tie with a ribbon and put them in a glass jar.

### ***Plan yard sale gifts.***

Agree to give only gifts that you bought at a yard sale. You need to do this early in the year since most people do not have yard sales in December. I bought a brand new jacket (still had the price tag of \$39.99 on it) for my sister-in-law at a yard sale for 25¢. (I hope my sister-in-law doesn't read this article.)

### ***Set limits.***

Set a limit of how much you will spend. We gave our children catalogues, sale papers and an imaginary amount of money and said, "If you had this much to spend, what would you buy?" It's an eye-opener on what things cost.

Ask them, "If you could only have three gifts, what would you like them to be?" Help them adjust their expectations beforehand.

### ***Evaluate children's lists carefully.***

Parents often grab a child's list and run frantically through the store, throwing toys in the cart feeling relieved when all the items have been purchased. Children want some toys because they look like fun on TV or when someone else is getting them.

Toys with lots of batteries end up being shelved because the batteries ran out after two hours. (We have several we can sell you cheap.) Give gifts they can continue to use. Blocks, Legos, games, art supplies and bicycles can be enjoyed again and again.

### ***Give gifts that give all year long.***

A subscription to a Christian magazine can help children and adults grow in their faith. A good devotional book or tape can be enjoyed all year long.

### ***Buy early.***

Buy early when there are sales. Last year I bought Christmas gift wrap at 90% off at the end of January.

### ***Give gifts that you make.***

Homemade items often cost less and mean more because of the personal investment. A friend made a puppet stage (out of a refrigerator box) and puppets for her three young nieces. Jams, cookies, breads and candies are great gifts. Take time to find out a person's favorite. A handmade toy or stitching can be passed from one generation to another.

### ***Give something you already own as a gift.***

A book, a piece of jewelry, a cherished keepsake, a baseball card or a stuffed animal may be valued more than a gift that could be bought.

### ***Give a letter or poem.***

Give a letter or a poem that you write yourself. Express your love, appreciation or pride in your loved one. I have a friend who writes a poem to each child every Christmas recounting some of that year's memories and her love for that child. A letter to a parent telling of your appreciation for their sacrifice, love and some warm memories you have would be more cherished than another knick-knack.

Now, where did I put that coupon for washing the dinner dishes? Merry Christmas! ■



**ABOUT THE WRITER:** Mrs. Sandra Atwood works with her husband, Richard, in the Townsend Free Will Baptist Mission in Townsend, Delaware.



# Shotgun Christmas

By Michael G. Garner



**W**hen I think back to childhood, I remember significant "ah-ha" moments that God used to shape my life and change me forever. One of those moments happened on Christmas Day, just before my 10th birthday.

For several years I had carried a Daisy BB gun alongside my dad on quail hunting trips, some of my fondest boyhood experiences. I was amazed that Dad allowed me to trudge along behind him slowing him down. But he did, and I was determined to keep pace with him and make him proud that I could enjoy his favorite sport with him.

I dreamed of owning a shotgun so I could *really* learn to hunt with him, but Dad told me I must wait. That Christmas morning, much to my surprise, I opened a box and discovered a shiny new single shot .410 gauge shotgun. What a thrill! And what a feeling of pride to think my dad considered me of age to own it.

Off to church we went that morning and then to Grandma's for Christmas dinner, with the promise that I'd shoot the gun

before the day was over.

After dinner, Dad, Rick, Uncle Johny and I drove a few miles from Grandma's to the Canadian River. I was cradling the new gun in my arms as we crossed fences and creeks to a safe place for target shooting near the river. I still remember how my heart pounded in anticipation.

Then suddenly, like it was in slow motion, I saw Dad slip on a concrete embankment and watched in terror as his foot twisted backwards at the ankle and the bone protruded through his sock. As Dad cried in pain and tried to avoid going into shock, my uncle Johny carried him on his back a half mile or so to the truck.

Rick and I tried to remain calm in the midst of our panic, fear and tears. We repeated over and over again, "It'll be okay, Dad!"

In those moments, walking back to the truck, the gun became meaningless to me. In fact I wished I had never received it. Things seemed empty and of little worth. As we made our way, I was struck with a keen awareness that my dad was mortal. This strong loving man who provided so much security in my life might not always be there for me. What would I ever do without him?

I prayed to God from the depths of my heart that Daddy would be okay. That was all I wanted now. That was all that mattered.

After surgery, and what seemed like weeks in the hospital, Dad came home in a full cast to recover. I can't tell you how excited and grateful I was to have him home. Our entire family was overjoyed. We felt secure again because Dad was home.

I can honestly tell you that I have never looked at my dad the same since that frightening Christmas Day. To this day, I cherish every moment I have with him.

That Christmas Day experience awakened in me a more intense love, appreciation and devotion to family, a deeper faith and understanding of the eternal things of God, and a heart of gratitude for the blessed hope of God's eternal promises to me. ■

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**ABOUT THE WRITER:** Reverend Michael Garner pastors Trinity Free Will Baptist Church in Bridgeton, Missouri. This article appeared in the December 1992 issue of the church *News-letter*. Reprinted by permission.



**Capital Stewardship Campaign**  
September 1993  
Update

State	Goal	Gifts
Alabama	\$ 97,290.00	\$ 1,000.00
Arizona	1,565.00	1,800.00
Arkansas	97,880.00	26,705.71
Atlantic Canada	2,000.00	.00
California	21,925.00	5.00
Colorado	1,005.00	1,005.00
Florida	26,365.00	2,481.36
Georgia	48,620.00	16,083.03
Hawaii	235.00	500.00
Idaho	450.00	.00
Illinois	20,600.00	790.00
Indiana	10,020.00	1,000.00
Iowa	340.00	.00
Kansas	1,640.00	.00
Kentucky	45,150.00	2,343.29
Louisiana	120.00	1,020.00
Maryland	8,675.00	150.00
Michigan	19,250.00	1,558.00
Mississippi	19,815.00	720.00
Missouri	77,025.00	18,854.75
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	4,682.97
Oklahoma	117,505.00	1,901.50
South Carolina	23,350.00	100.00
Tennessee	100,040.00	21,616.29
Texas	14,705.00	4,700.00
Virginia	30,975.00	405.00
West Virginia	58,840.00	320.00
Other	23,780.00	2,868.85
<b>Totals</b>	<b>\$1,000,000.00</b>	<b>\$113,910.75</b>



## Videotapes

on  
**Free Will Baptist Doctrines**  
by  
**Dr. Robert Picirilli**

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Nashville, TN 37205  
615/383-1340

# Christmas and the Lord's Prayer

By R. F. Smith, Jr.

**H**is name is Willie. He's about five years old, that searching, seeking, creative age when children get things mixed up but shed shafts of insight and wisdom as they merge things never before merged.

It was Christmas time when everything a five-year-old does is laced with Christmas thinking. That morning in church school they were praying the Lord's Prayer. When they reached that part about "forgiving trespasses," etc., Willie stunned the teacher.

He prayed, "Forgive us our Christmases as we forgive those who Christmas against us."

I read about Willie's editorial alteration of the famous prayer last Christmas. And I've been thinking about it ever since.

He might have a point. Maybe we do need forgiveness for "our Christmases." Such as the times we allow ourselves to get so tangled up in the scaffolding of Christmas that we miss its meaning.

And the times when fatigue and frustration combine to snap patience and we unload harsh phrases on family, friends and all others struggling to make life happen, and to make it real.

Oh, yes, and the times we judge people's estimate of our friendship by the size of the gift they give us, or how little they wrote on the card they sent us.

"*Forgive us our Christmases . . .*" Indeed, Willie. Indeed.

And let us forgive those who "Christmas against us." The curt comment of the store clerk, for instance, who seems to say, "I couldn't care less," as we spend hard-earned money to keep store and clerk in business.

Clerks get tired too. Feet hurt. Mind mangles as demanding crowds lose patience. Days are long. Pay is short. And they "*Christmas against us.*"

We might as well add to Willie's new version of our Lord's Prayer. "*And lead us not into temptation . . .*" The temptation of allowing the celebration of Christmas to overshadow the fact of Christmas.

Perhaps Christmas would focus for us if we prayed the last sentence of Jesus' prayer (and made it our life-sentence):

"*For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.*"

Amen indeed. ■

ABOUT THE WRITER: Dr. R. F. Smith, Jr. is senior pastor at Fifth Avenue Baptist Church in Huntington, West Virginia.





# The North Star of Life

By Paul Harrison

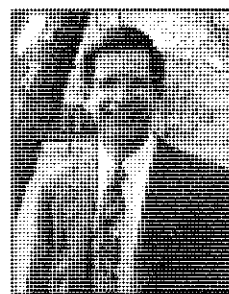
Far from being an irrational escape from life, the Christian's bold statement that God is real and is to be consulted for direction in life is simply the response of faith. This faith that makes the believer look beyond the laws of nature to the Law-maker defines the basic distinction between Christians and unbelievers. The one believes in an authority beyond himself and the other does not.

## Two Captains

Richard Neuhaus said it well: "Two ships, both without a compass, are drifting on a night as dark as pitch. The one captain is resigned to having lost his way. The other searches, perhaps desperately, for a glimpse of the North Star. The second is looking for an authoritative point of reference, while the first assumes there is none."

"The merits of their behavior cannot be determined by reference to different personality types. One is not autonomous and mature while the other is dependent and authoritarian. Our judgment of their different attitudes depends on whether we believe that, in fact, there is such a star that can provide an authoritative point of reference and direction."

I have seen the North Star of life. And such a faith, while not answering all my questions, has guided me away from the rocks of despair. Life has not disappointed me, not because of an absence of bumps and bruises, but because God who knows and cares has whispered words of hope in my ear. Listen, and perhaps you too will hear. ■



ABOUT THE WRITER: Dr. Paul Harrison pastors Cross Timbers Free Will Baptist Church in Nashville, Tennessee.

I wanted to cry when I heard a father interviewed on the evening news last night. He had lost a child in the blazing furnace once called the Branch Davidian Compound. He lamented: "I'm disappointed in my son; I'm disappointed in the government; I'm disappointed in life."

Disappointed in life—I wonder if this cry doesn't describe the feelings of many in our society. Life has let them down.

Such an attitude swells to heart-wrenching proportions when we compare it to the way life is supposed to be. Our inner persons hold in hard-drive memory a picture of this "supposed-to-be" life, and this memory makes our stark reality a pill all the harder to swallow.

As one commented during World War II, "It is not so much the awfulness of what is happening that gets me down as it is the dismaying contrast between what is happening and all that we had dreamed." Such a "dismaying contrast" often confronts modern man.

## Good News

But this is precisely where the good news of Christianity erupts into our lives. In the midst of our failures and threatening despair, God trumpets a message of hope: Jesus died

for our sin and rose again. "The night only commends the day," He says. Light can come from darkness. Good can come from evil. Life can come from death.

When such a message of hope is announced, it is not surprising that men sit up and pay attention. Oh, some may scoff and pretend they are above doubt and despair, but those honest souls who openly gaze at the vacuum in their lives find the account of a once-suffering Savior now risen in victory a most blessed truth indeed.

As would be expected, such a faith in a God who raised the dead radically affects one's outlook on life. While he may not be authoritative in interpreting current events, the Christian with a diamond-hard trust in God declares that a sovereign Hand directs the affairs of men. He asserts that the Final Event of this human saga has been preordained in Heaven.

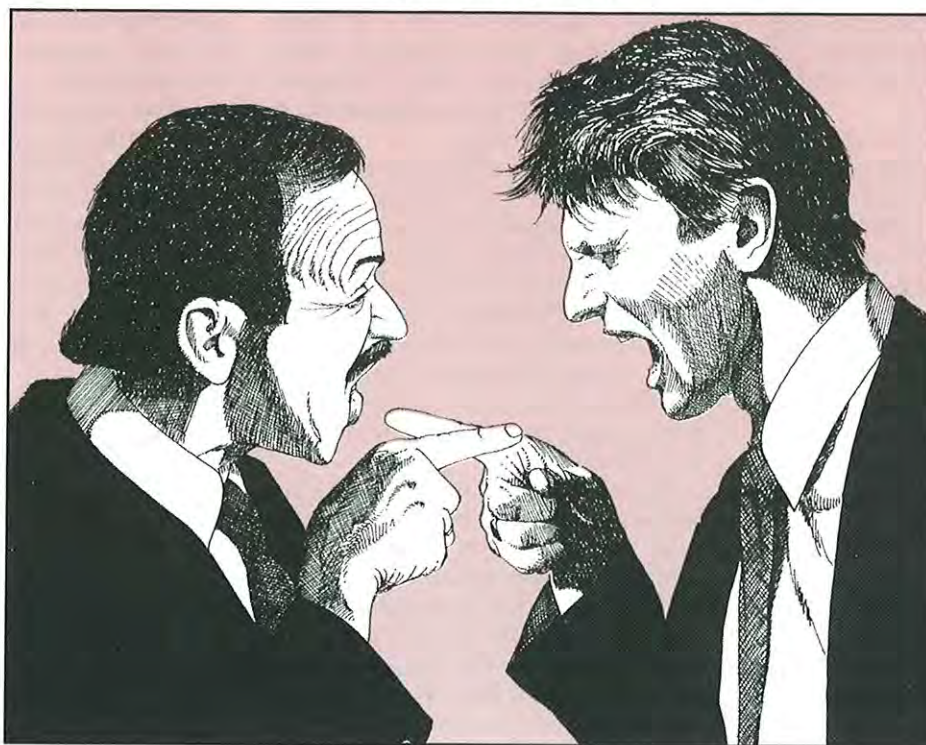
## Cry Foul

Interestingly, however, the Christian belief that there is a God who offers meaning to life causes the unbeliever to cry foul. Caustic atheists and toned-down agnostics both offer their accusation that such a faith is merely an opiate to soothe the pain of meaninglessness. But they are mistaken.



# The Dynamics of Forgiveness

By David Aycock



In the 13th century the cities in Italy enjoyed independent status. In 1249 A.D. a soldier serving in the army of the city of Bologna deserted to Modena and took with him an old broken bucket used as a water trough for army horses.

Bologna waived her rights to the fugitive but insisted on the return of the bucket. Proud Modena refused and a bloody war began. The conflict lasted 22 years. Although it was started by an old horse pail, the bloodshed and atrocities were real. The water trough that caused all the trouble is still under the possession of Modena and is exhibited in the basement of the Ghirlandina Tower.

If we were to examine the cause for conflicts in our families, churches and denomination, it may surprise us how many were brought on by "water troughs." As the casualties were real in the war between the Italian cities, so are the casualties in our conflicts. There are many heartaches and broken relationships that could be avoided if those involved were

willing to exercise the dynamics of forgiveness.

## Wonder-Working Word

The term *dynamics* expresses how something is powerful and effective. Forgiveness is truly dynamic. It is a wonder-working word. Yet it remains untapped by our families, churches and denomination. Why is that? Perhaps we choose to live in the slough of hypocrisy rather than exert ourselves to practice forgiveness. It is our duty to constantly pursue the dynamics of forgiveness in our Christian experience.

Forgiveness does not deny wrong doing. It calls for acknowledging sin and seeking pardon. Also, it acknowledges that harm against another person has been committed and the relationship must be restored.

Forgiveness is God's tool to produce freedom of spirit. It emancipates from the dark shadows of strife that loom over the spirit. It restores

the troubled soul. Forgiveness triumphs in peace and unity where discord vies for mastery.

Peter was a man who could not grasp the dynamics of forgiveness. He wanted to know how many times he had to forgive his neighbor. To him forgiveness was a chore. Jesus presented a parable in Matthew 18:21-35 to open Peter's eyes as well as ours to the immensity of forgiveness.

## A Debt

In the parable, the king was reviewing his accounts when he saw a servant's name who owed him 10,000 talents (vv. 23-25). It is said that one talent was worth 6,000 denarii (a denarius was comparable to a day's wage). That equals 60 million denarii.

What's staggering about this multiplication is that 60 million denarii amounts to 164,384 years of labor. The servant was told to pay up immediately. Not having the means, he was ordered to be sold along with



his family and his possessions by the king.

There are two things worth noting in these verses. First, the servant's debt represents the magnitude of our debt toward God. Second, the judgment passed against the servant represents the judgment we deserve from God.

We will always have a deep appreciation for forgiveness when we remind ourselves that our debt toward God was infinite because God is infinite. The result of our debt demanded eternal banishment from the presence of God.

The servant in the parable pleaded for mercy (vv. 26-27). This was a desperate plea from a servant who was impotent to rectify his guilt. The king recognized the servant's predicament. He showed the servant compassion and forgave the debt.

God showed His compassion toward us when Jesus Christ, His Son, died on the cross for our sins and for the sins of all mankind. Through Him our account was cleared and we were declared righteous in Him. We have personally experienced the dynamics of forgiveness.

### Mean-Spirited Men

It seems that with such a burden lifted the servant would express his

gratitude by forgiving his fellow man (vv. 28-30). That was not the case. He approached his fellow servant who owed him 100 denarii (pence). This was comparable to approximately a quarter of a year of labor. This amount was minuscule compared to his former debt. His fellow servant pleaded for forgiveness from him but was denied.

The servant's attitude prevails today. We have received pardon for our debt toward Almighty God, but we are unwilling to forgive one another. It is time to exercise forgiveness in our families, churches and denomination. Accusations have been freely verbalized against one another in our denomination. Few have sought to exercise the dynamics of forgiveness.

Recall the reaction of the king when he heard of the servant's attitude (vv. 32-34). He was angry and ordered the servant cast into prison and punished for his behavior. The application of this parable is a powerful one (v. 35). We can expect the same treatment from God if we fail to forgive our brothers from our hearts.

### Forgive One Another

The impact that the unmerciful servant had on his fellow servants

was singular (v. 31). They were grieved and related their sorrow to the king. Our unwillingness to forgive has a profound effect on others. How many families and churches are grieving over an unforgiving spirit? We are a denomination that bleeds for restoration.

Why are we reluctant to exercise the dynamics of forgiveness? It would rejuvenate our homes, churches and denomination. The damages caused by an unforgiving spirit are real. The casualties are real. To war over a water trough seems so trivial. Yet, have we not our own water troughs? ■



ABOUT THE WRITER: Reverend David Aycock pastors Fellowship Free Will Baptist Church in Florence, South Carolina. He also serves as clerk of the South Carolina State Association of Free Will Baptists.

## BEYOND BELIEF





# He Needed a Hand

By David Taylor



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**H**e did not look like the typical down-and-outer wanting a hand-out from the church. He stood next to a late model car. His clothes were casual and fairly new. There was no alcohol on his breath, nor did his clothes give off the odor of someone needing a bath. But he said he needed help.

He'd been to the church of his youth—the priest said it was too late; they could not help him. The Baptist church down the street said, "Sorry, we can't help you."

He had walked past our church many times while exercising his dog. Of course, he did not need any help then. He was a university professor with a Ph.D; he taught calculus. His wife worked for an airline. They'd bought a home, had money in the bank, a baby on the way. He had the American dream. His native Honduras and the Puerto Rico of his youth were a lifetime away.

As tough on the ego as it is to admit, my preaching did not attract him to our church. Nor did our music, our people or our programs. He came because he saw our church as his last hope. Something inside told him he had better stop and ask for help, or else.

His problem unfortunately, is all too common. He and his wife had all the possessions of life, but they had no peace. She had recently left him. Now he could not sleep without the help of alcohol. He had no appetite.

"I go to the university every day," he said. "They have my body, but they do not have me."

Of all the people who have ever come to our church, it struck me that he had come for the most biblical reason—he was desperate. He had nowhere else to turn, and he knew it.

He did not want money. He did not want food. He did not want a hand-out. What he wanted was a hand.

As I listened to his broken heart beg for help, it did not take a theological genius to realize Who he needed. So I showed him the only Hand I knew which could help him—you know the one, it has a nail print in it.

He read from the scriptures about his sin, God's Son and the great love that nailed Jesus to the cross. Then as we prayed, the calculus professor reached out and took hold of that nail-scarred Hand.

His life does not have a fairy-tale

ending; it does have a new beginning. He has not yet been reconciled with his wife. He struggles with the many sides of his new-found faith.

Less than a week after his conversion, he said as he left the service, "I can sleep at night now without any crutch."

As a church we have not given up on him, nor will we. For some reason, God dropped him into our lap. There was no door-to-door visitation, no news blitz, no all-night prayer vigil. He just showed up one Sunday night in need of a hand. As the professor reached up, the Savior reached down. That's today's version of the old, old story. ■



**ABOUT THE WRITER:** Reverend David Taylor pastors First Free Will Baptist Church in Tucson, Arizona.



**“**I guess I left youth ministry just in time,” Dan said.

Dan and I had just talked about some of the issues I was now facing in the ministry—teen pregnancy, parental abuse, blended families, eating disorders and drug abuse. These issues, combined with “traditional problems” like insecurity and peer pressure, overwhelmed Dan, leading him to the observation that he had retired “just in time”—during a more peaceful era.

Today’s teenagers grow up faster, face more temptations and experience adult stresses earlier than their counterparts of 10-20 years ago. Whether we wrestle with teen problems related to family breakdown or issues created by the pressures of today’s society, certain principles can help us prepare for the best possible ministry to those in need.

### Understand

I once thought that Jenny, a high school junior, was exaggerating when she claimed she was suffering from stress caused by her parents’ expectations and pressures—until I spent an evening with her parents. I heard them speak emphatically about Jenny’s need to go to an Ivy League college. “Anything less than Ivy League would be failure to achieve her full potential,” they concluded.

As youth leaders, we need to do our homework concerning the pressures under which today’s young people live. This might involve interviewing a high school teacher or principal. It might involve researching current trends.

Compassionate responses to the needs of young people and their families start with an understanding of the world in which they live.

### Accept

After she graduated from college, Elaine told me that she had suffered from an eating disorder all through high school. She had been in my



# Helping Hurting Kids

By Paul Borthwick

youth ministry, but I had no idea of her problem. “Why didn’t you tell me?” I asked.

“I thought you would no longer like me, and I was afraid that you’d kick me out or belittle me,” she replied.

To encourage group members to share their problems with us, we need to create an atmosphere that communicates acceptance. This might be done by sharing our own problems or by studying the mercy of God in group meetings. However we achieve it, our goal must be to communicate to group members, “People with problems are welcome here.”

### Take Them Seriously

Julie came to me and asked to talk personally. “I am the victim of child abuse,” she said. “My mother is beating me.”

In my heart, I found the accusa-

tion hard to believe. Her mother served in a leadership position in our church, and I knew that Julie was going through a period of rebellion against God and her mother.

But I realized that Julie had made herself vulnerable to me by sharing her problem. Instead of dismissing her complaint as a fabrication resulting from her rebellion, I prayed with her and told her I would pursue the matter.

### Make Wise Promises

Promise to “hang in there” with a group member through his or her problems, but don’t promise to “be there every moment.” Promise to work for solutions, but don’t promise quick answers to problems that have been developing for years.

The realities of being a youth leader—whether in a volunteer capacity or as a professional—demand that we pay attention to many young people. As a result, wisdom tells us to be cautious before we promise to solve all the problems our group members face.

### Avoid “Turn-offs”

As you counsel personally with young people, try to avoid the following pitfalls.

### Over-Identification

“I understand completely. I faced that exact problem when I was your age.” Even if this is true, the young person facing intense personal problems comes to us believing that no one has ever faced his or her problems before. Over-identification can cause young people to stop sharing because they think that we won’t listen or that we’ll belittle their problems as “average.”

### Betrayal of Confidence

When a young person confides in us, we must defend that person’s dignity by keeping that which is shared confidential. Personal problems should not become common youth group knowledge, nor talked



about with others under the guise of "Please pray for \_\_\_\_" unless the young person releases us to do so.

Even in extreme cases we should inform the young person first that we are going to tell his or her parents before we actually do it. Being honest with the teenager can help build trust.

### *Jumping to Conclusions*

Remember Julie, the young woman who accused her mother of child abuse? My first reaction was to defend her mother's reputation. My second reaction was to believe Julie. In reality, the answer was somewhere in between, and it took a long discussion and many questions to discern how to proceed.

If I jumped immediately to Julie's defense, she might have thought, *This guy's a real sucker. He's easy to get on my side.* If I defended her mother, Julie might never have returned to the group. Instead, I proceeded slowly and helped both parties understand how they were contributing to the problem.

### *Giving Trite Answers and Panaceas*

Offering cure-alls to young people or glib spiritual clichés subtly builds expectations which may not be met. Certainly God can do miracles, but more often He brings healing through long-term love and support of friends. Let's pray for His grace to strengthen us to respond with compassion. ■

Article provided by David C. Cook Publishing Company. Excerpted from *They Eat Dirt, Don't They?*



## Cooperative Channel Contributions September 1993

### RECEIPTS:

State	Designated	CO-OP (Undesignated)	Total	Sept. '92	Yr. To Date
Alabama	\$ 5,810.58	\$ .00	\$ 5,810.58	\$ 112.30	\$ 75,011.78
Arizona	382.61	67.10	449.71	59.40	1,913.62
Arkansas	20,818.55	6,474.08	27,292.63	5,100.40	244,191.51
California	.00	.00	.00	914.03	7,260.83
Colorado	.00	.00	.00	.00	250.00
Delaware	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
Florida	.00	1,901.48	1,901.48	3,253.01	19,673.35
Georgia	5,617.04	2,037.69	7,654.73	.00	94,598.26
Hawaii	.00	.00	.00	.00	500.00
Idaho	.00	.00	.00	.00	93.62
Illinois	4,938.96	1,668.93	6,607.89	90.07	70,202.18
Indiana	1,001.03	152.53	1,153.56	612.59	6,092.16
Iowa	90.00	.00	90.00	.00	360.00
Kansas	.00	43.49	43.49	54.80	221.90
Kentucky	415.00	439.34	854.34	222.46	8,905.21
Louisiana	.00	.00	.00	.00	40.00
Maryland	.00	.00	.00	.00	600.00
Michigan	20,416.98	2,232.93	22,649.91	17,837.18	133,550.13
Mississippi	.00	589.24	589.24	832.44	5,216.05
Missouri	11,967.77	.00	11,967.77	12,850.72	92,325.75
Montana	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
New Jersey	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
New Mexico	.00	.00	.00	.00	418.10
North Carolina	225.00	394.02	619.02	1,817.75	12,783.05
Ohio	195.00	3,566.44	3,761.44	3,262.02	36,706.38
Oklahoma	32,939.70	.00	32,939.70	42,342.25	376,820.67
South Carolina	16,798.97	309.18	17,108.15	20,584.12	158,828.30
Tennessee	8,636.64	2,461.97	11,098.61	7,184.93	76,709.88
Texas	7,471.22	318.81	7,790.03	7,873.73	78,971.64
Virginia	480.88	25.00	505.88	570.08	7,270.93
West Virginia	3,955.65	134.20	4,089.85	3,368.54	36,664.87
Canada	.00	.00	.00	.00	26.88
Northwest Assoc.	.00	.00	.00	11.88	93.07
Other	149.00	.00	149.03	.00	168.97
Totals	<u>\$142,310.58</u>	<u>\$22,816.43</u>	<u>\$165,127.01</u>	<u>\$128,954.70</u>	<u>\$1,546,469.09</u>

### DISBURSEMENTS:

Executive Office	\$10,793.52	\$14,529.57	\$25,323.09	\$25,323.09	\$227,907.78
Foreign Missions	84,883.64	1,905.98	86,789.62	61,914.61	808,097.24
FWBBC	8,802.47	1,905.98	10,708.45	5,982.24	98,376.91
Home Missions	28,906.56	1,491.62	30,398.18	25,681.51	284,882.30
Retirement & Insurance	760.63	1,160.16	1,920.79	1,718.96	21,196.13
Master's Men	1,417.76	1,160.16	2,577.92	1,816.37	25,957.02
Commission for					
Theo. Integrity	87.39	41.44	128.83	138.43	1,401.19
FWB Foundation	1,111.55	497.20	1,608.75	971.98	12,942.18
Historical Commission	84.27	41.44	125.71	133.03	1,294.06
Music Commission	63.30	41.44	104.74	125.90	1,216.07
Radio & TV Commission	63.25	41.44	104.69	125.90	1,300.04
Hillsdale FWB College	2,346.03	.00	2,346.03	2,075.01	17,220.20
Other	2,990.21	.00	2,990.21	2,947.67	44,737.97
Totals	<u>\$142,310.58</u>	<u>\$22,816.43</u>	<u>\$165,127.01</u>	<u>\$128,954.70</u>	<u>\$1,546,469.09</u>



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# FREE WILL BAPTIST NEWSFRONT

## Song Leader, I. L. Stanley, Passes



*I. L. Stanley leads singing at 1984 National Convention.*

TUPELO, MS—Funeral services were conducted September 29 in Tupelo for Mr. I. L. (Iris Lyndon) Stanley who served 25 years as the first superintendent of the Free Will Baptist Home for Children in Greeneville, Tennessee. Mr. Stanley died September 27 at age 87. Reverend Wayne Bess, pastor of Tupelo FWB Church, officiated.

Mr. Stanley became superintendent of the children's home in 1939. He started Harris Memorial FWB Church in Greeneville so the children would have a Free Will Baptist church to attend.

Brother Stanley's influence among Free Will Baptists touched thousands of lives. He assisted the late Rev. M. L. Hollis as song leader in starting a number of Free Will Baptist churches in Mississippi and Alabama. He was a respected lay leader. He frequently served as song leader when the National Association held its annual sessions.

Three people gave verbal trib-

utes during Mr. Stanley's funeral. Former missionary to India, Trula Cronk, spoke of his influence on her life. Rev. Roger Hood, present superintendent of the children's home, and Rev. Ken Smith who pastors Harris Memorial FWB Church also spoke in tribute.

Rev. Tim Murfin sang "Prepare to Meet Thy God," a song which had been written by I. L. Stanley's father. Approximately 150 people attended the service.

Mr. Stanley was born March 19, 1906, in Saltillo, Mississippi. He was a World War II veteran of the U.S. Army and a former school teacher with the Lee County School System in Mississippi.

Survivors include his wife of 62 years, Mary Frances Stevens Stanley of Tupelo; three sisters, Yvonne Hurt of Tupelo, Bessie Will Lee of Saltillo and Laverne Ricker of Johnson City, Tennessee.

He was buried at Spring Hill Cemetery in Saltillo.

## Missouri Church Turns 100

HARTVILLE, MO—Members of New Home FWB Church in Hartville scheduled day-long activities on September 5 to celebrate their centennial anniversary, according to Pastor John Postlewaite. The afternoon program included a skit re-enacting the April 17, 1893, organizational service. Descendants of the charter members were used as the actors.

Missouri executive secretary Nathan Ruble delivered the centennial sermon from Hebrews 11. Some 128 people registered for the celebration, including four former pastors—Reverends Herbert Vandivort, R.E. Helsey, Ivan Parker and Jerry Ward.

The New Home FWB Church organized in 1893 with 16 charter members. After the Bible was presented as the only rule of faith and practice, and the FWB Church Covenant adopted, the church elected Reverend M.E. Braisher as first pastor.

A number of members shared memories of past church experiences. The group gave thanks to God for all whose faithfulness over the past 100 years kept the church true to the Lord.



## Reverend Jerry Presley With the Lord



MEMPHIS, TN—Reverend Jerry Presley, 61, died September 29, 1993, after a brief illness. He had survived a heart transplant, open heart surgery and several heart attacks between 1974 and 1987. The weekend before his death, he preached in Warren, Michigan, where he developed an infection related to a diabetic condition.

Rev. Presley was ordained as a Free Will Baptist minister in 1962. He pastored churches 26 years (1962-1987) in Tennessee and Illinois until declining health forced him to resign from full-time pastoral work. In 1989 Jerry and Bea Presley began conducting services in area nursing homes near their residence in Olive Branch, Mississippi.

Brother Presley maintained an active preaching ministry until his death. He was sought as a speaker for weekend revivals, mission rallies and pulpit supply.

In a March 1990 article in *Contact* regarding the radical change in his ministerial lifestyle, Jerry advised those facing tough times to "rise above your circumstances and begin to praise and honor God with what you have."

Brother Presley held numer-

ous denominational positions, including promotional secretary for Tennessee's Union Association, youth camp director, and 10 years as clerk of Union Ministerial Association. He also taught school in four Tennessee counties.

Funeral services were conducted September 30 in Olive Branch, Mississippi. He was buried in Sweetwater, Tennessee. Reverends Glenn Poston and Gwyn Pugh officiated.

He is survived by his wife, Beatrice; two daughters, Mrs. Suzie Shepherd and Mrs. Pamela Walker of Memphis; one son, Tim Presley of Olive Branch, Mississippi; two sisters, three brothers and six grandchildren.

## South Carolina Pastor Dies



FLORENCE, SC—Dr. Danny Howell, pastor of First FWB Church in Florence, died September 4 from injuries he received after he fell 15 feet off a ladder onto a concrete floor. The accident occurred as he climbed the ladder to check work being done in the church's gymnasium.

Reverend Howell, 46, had pastored First FWB Church in Florence since 1988. Converted in 1958, he answered the call to

preach in 1977 and was ordained to the ministry in 1981. He pastored two North Carolina churches—First FWB Church in Morehead City and Goshen FWB Church in Mount Holly.

Brother Howell attended three educational institutions. He earned the doctor of ministry and master of ministry degrees at Bethany Theological Seminary (Dothan, Ala.); bachelor of science degree and Bible diploma at Free Will Baptist Bible College; associate of arts degree at Lenoir Community College (Kinston, N.C.).

Funeral services were conducted September 6 in Florence at First FWB Church. Reverends Paul Ange and Henry Potter officiated. He was buried in Fairview Cemetery, LaGrange, NC.

Dr. Howell is survived by his wife, LaRue Harris Howell; two daughters, Sherri and Michelle; one son, Joshua.

## Directory Update

### OHIO

Jerry Massie, II, to Dogwood Ridge Church, Wheelersburg

Ed Davis to Frederick Church, Wheelersburg

Robert Maynard to Trinity Church, Columbus

Lawrence Barnes to Wellston Church, Wellston

### OKLAHOMA

Veachel Arnold to Calvary Church, Claremore

Geary Ussery to Campground Church, Collinsville

James Brown to Perry Church, Stigler

Carl Shivers to Cedar Grove Church, Francis

### SOUTH CAROLINA

Sherwood Lee to Sand Hill Church, Coward from Côte d'Ivoire, West Africa as missionary

Carl Barker to Sweet Home Church, Socastee

Dale McCoy to Canaan Church, Lancaster from Fellowship Church, Dunn, NC

### TENNESSEE

Ted Reynolds to Trinity Church, Erwin from Ahoskie Church, Ahoskie, NC

### OTHER PERSONNEL

Tom Diamond to United Christian Academy, Dickson, TN as principal from New Beginnings Church, Wilson, NC, as youth director

Kevin Scott to Trinity Church, Bridgeton, MO, as minister of youth and evangelism

Darryn McGee to First Church, Owasso, OK, as minister of music and Christian education



## West Virginia Leader, Ottis Hensley, Found Dead



Ottis Hensley (R) at 1991 Leadership Conference.

CHARLESTON, WV—The West Virginia promotional director, Reverend Ottis Hensley, was found dead about midnight October 4 after he fell down an embankment on the West Virginia Turnpike outside Charleston. Authorities speculate that the 51-year-old Free Will Baptist minister stopped his car around 10:00 p.m., left the engine running and accidentally fell over a steep bank. He apparently broke his neck on impact and died a few

minutes later.

Brother Hensley was returning home from a preaching appointment when the incident occurred. His duties as West Virginia promotional director included editing the state paper, *The Messenger*, and managing the state book store. He was also in his fourth year as pastor of Kilsyth FWB Church at the time of his death.

Mr. Hensley invested 23 years of his life as a Free Will Baptist

minister in West Virginia. He had pastored three churches before assuming pastoral duties with the Kilsyth congregation. He formerly chaired the state Missions Board. He served on the 1991 Steering Committee when West Virginia hosted the National Association in Charleston. He was a graduate of Bethany Bible College in Bethany, Alabama.

Funeral services were conducted October 7 at Bradley FWB Church. Reverends Tom Price, Carl Vallance and Clarence Fortner officiated. Burial followed at Blue Ridge Memorial Gardens in Prosperity.

Reverend Hensley is survived by his wife, Hazel, of MacArthur; two sons, Monroe Hensley of Beckley, and Allen Hensley of MacArthur; three daughters, Mrs. Lenora Harman of Charleston, Mrs. Jennifer Pruitt of Pikes Branch, and Lucinda Hensley of MacArthur; five brothers, two sisters and six grandchildren.

## Former Children's Home Superintendent Dies



GREER, SC—Reverend James B. Rice, Jr., who served 11 years as superintendent of the Free Will Baptist Children's Home in Turbeville, died September 10 at White Oak Nursing Home after a brief illness. The 65-year-old Free Will Baptist minister was a mem-

ber of Oates FWB Church in Greer, his final pastorate, at the time of his death.

Brother J. B. Rice, Jr. invested his ministry in South Carolina churches after three years as pastor of New Zion FWB Church in Waycross, Georgia. He moved to South Carolina in 1969 where he pastored Lockhart FWB Church for three years. He then established First FWB Church in Greer as a joint project home missionary with the Beaver Creek Home Mission Board and the national Home Missions Board.

He moved from the mission work to his 11-year tenure as superintendent of the Free Will Baptist Children's Home. The South Carolina State Association

honored Rev. and Mrs. Rice at the 1993 session for their work with the home.

Brother Rice was a graduate of the University of Georgia and a U.S. Navy veteran of World War II.

Funeral services were conducted September 13 at First FWB Church in Greer. Reverends Bill Vanderford, Leroy Lowery and John Suttles officiated. Interment followed at Hillcrest Memorial Gardens in Greer.

Rev. Rice is survived by his wife, Joanne Hammond Rice; a daughter, Vicky Groce of Greer; a son, Curtis Rice of Forest City, NC; one sister and three grandchildren.



## CURRENTLY...

Members of **Roan Street FWB Church** in **Elizabethton, TN**, celebrated their 45th anniversary. The church was founded by **J. C. Howington**. **Tim Farris** became pastor in November 1992.

There's good news at **Cross Roads FWB Church** in **Billings, MT**. Pastor **Ron Palmer** said, "On September 17, we received a loan from the national Home Missions Board and signed closing papers transferring this property. The property and facilities at 30 Maier Road, Billings, MT, are now truly Free Will Baptist by title deed." The group averaged 32 in attendance through the summer. Pastor Palmer says he hopes the Cross Roads Church can be a cornerstone for building a Montana association.

**Gateway FWB Church** in **Virginia Beach, VA**, celebrated their 50th anniversary this October. Pastor **Dale Burden** has led the church for 28 years.

**Westerville FWB Church** in **Westerville, OH**, reports nine baptisms and two new members. **Mike Mounts** pastors.

Pastor **Bert Miller** organized **Lockburne FWB Church** in **Lockburne, OH**, 25 years ago. He has been the pastor for the past 25 years. Brother Miller reports five conversions and one rededication in recent services.

**Samantha FWB Church** in **Leesburg, OH**, completed blacktop work in the parking lot. Pastor **Wiley Perkins** reports six baptisms and six new members.

Camping attracts widespread interest among Free Will Baptists each summer. One such outreach is the **Cumberland Youth Camp** sponsored by the Cumberland Association of Free Will Baptists in middle **Tennessee**. Camp director **Marion Pettus** said the camp hosted 462 campers this summer with 44 salvation decisions and many more rededication commitments.

The man wearing that big smile in **Rapid City, SD**, is Pastor **Tim Coats** at **Harvest Time FWB Church**. It seems that the youth group from **Airport FWB Church** in **Tulsa, OK**, came to town wearing their work clothes. Coats said, "They prayed, painted the interior of the church, conducted a three-night prayer revival—all of which resulted in two salvation decisions and other quite pleas-

ant experiences."

Members of **Resurrection FWB Church** in **Culver City, CA**, want to do more than conduct services in their local church. Pastor **Osmundo Corrales** led the group to mother a new church. **Richard Fernandez** will pastor the new congregation.

Sixty years ago Rev. **Truman Huddleston** began his ministry as a Free Will Baptist preacher. After seven years in Oklahoma, Bro. Huddleston moved to central California where, for the past 53 years, he has been active in organizing and pastoring Free Will Baptist churches. The pioneer minister used his skills as a mechanic and blacksmith to provide for his family's needs as he helped carve out a work for Free Will Baptists in California. Bro. Huddleston retired from active ministry this year.

**Lafayette FWB Church** in **Stigler, OK**, turned 80 years old this August. The group organized with 15 charter members in 1913. **R. H. Byrd** was elected as first pastor. During a 1921 revival meeting, there were 58 conversions, 47 new members and 44 baptisms. **N. L. Craig** pastors.

When **Cedar Grove FWB Church** in **Francis, OK**, was organized, the settlement and post office were still in Indian Territory. The church was organized in 1892 and first met in a log cabin on the south bank of the Canadian River. Pastor **Carl Shivers** led the congregation in centennial celebration this year. The first building was shared with another congregation who were mostly from the north side of the river. Once after a prolonged period of rain, members went to check on the church house and discovered that the other group had loaded the building on wagons and moved it across the river.

Members of **Zion Hill FWB Church** in **Oologah, OK**, celebrated homecoming and dedication services this August, according to Pastor **Charles Brazeal**. The group recently constructed a new building that includes a sanctuary, fellowship hall and classrooms. The structure is debt-free. **Bob and Goldie Boyd** gave the church history to the congregation. It included the report of a great

revival in 1931 when **Melvin Bingham** preached and 118 people were converted.

**Folsom FWB Church** in **Coleman, OK**, conducted its first services in their new sanctuary in July. Pastor **Wayne Smith** said the new sanctuary is 40' by 100'. The congregation also reported eight baptisms.

**First FWB Church** in **Stigler, OK**, reports four baptisms and 13 new members. **Tommy Honeycutt** began duties as associate pastor this summer.

Pastor **Jerry Copeland** reports seven baptisms at **Way of the Cross FWB Church** in **Sallisaw, OK**. The group also installed new carpet and pews in the sanctuary.

Pastor **Glen Wiley** reports 15 conversions at **Oak Vale FWB Church** in **Oak Vale, WV**.

Members of **Mona Hill FWB Church** in **Monaville, WV**, have a new place to worship. Pastor **Andy Maynard** said the new sanctuary will seat 600 people, with another 200 in the youth sanctuary. The church was formally organized in 1938. Since they moved into their new building this summer, members report 15 conversions.

The **Texas Christian Education Board** took 25 young people from various Texas FWB churches on a three-day adventure called Mission Plano. The youth and their sponsors spent their three days learning about urban missions in a hands-on fashion. The event was hosted by **Collin Creek FWB Church** in **Plano**. The participants spent their time doing physical work at the church building and property, conducting a youth rally and seeing the city.

Pastor **David Sutton** reports 10 conversions at **First FWB Church** in **Duncanville, TX**, during a Kids Crusade. The crusade was under the direction of **Dean Stone**, administrator and children's minister at Donelson FWB Church in Nashville, TN.

Pastor **David Archer** at **Faith FWB Church** in **Glenpool, OK**, reports some good news. The church witnessed 16 conversions, 11 baptisms and welcomed nine new members. The group began two morning worship services in October. ■





## WOMAN'S AUXILIARY

### Woman's Window on the World

By Mary R. Wisehart

#### From My Window

I like endings. The last day of December approaches and 1993 will end. I'd like to make a package of 1993 and tuck it away, in the very back of the file. It's been a year full of bumps, scrapes and bruises. But, like William James said, every experience has imprinted itself indelibly on the nerves and tissues of our beings. No, in a way, I can't end 1993 at all. It isn't over.

And of course some things in the 1993 file may be quite useful, maybe even necessary, in meeting the challenges of 1994. Who knows? I may be glad that I can put my hands on that file as I live through 1994. It may prove invaluable.

But it is good to be able to say, "I make an end of this." And file or toss or wrap and tie, and, as my friend Miss Mary used to do, mark it TBTA—to be thrown away.

It's good to clean out the closets of our minds sometimes and decide what we should keep, what should be refurbished, sent to the cleaners, repaired and restored. Some things should be tossed and disposed of without a backward glance. Some should be refreshed and some moved out of storage.

A new year begins. "Forgetting those things which are behind," I reach toward those things which are before.

I don't know what God has designed for me in 1994. Yet I know that the file is already in His hands. And I know His thoughts toward us. Jeremiah 29:11, "For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end."

#### January is Enlistment Month

January is the designated month for enlisting new members in WNAC. The beginning of the year is a good time to encourage women to join with the group. In some areas the weather may hinder a special enlistment meeting. Women feel free to change the month when January is not convenient.

Enlistment materials are available from the WNAC office. Check the current supplies leaflet and order as much as you need.

Encouraging women to join WNAC and serve with Free Will Baptist women should be

an all-year project. *Enlistment Ideas* is now available from the office for \$2. It includes ideas for invitations each month of the year.

#### WNAC's Executive Committee Meets

December is the month for the regular meeting of the WNAC Executive Committee.

The Committee meets at the National Offices in Antioch to plan for the 1994 convention and retreat, approve a budget, and take care of various other details of the work.

#### The Executive Committee for 1993-1995

President	Mary R. Neal
Vice President	Barbara Fletcher
Secretary	Jo Ann Wood
Executive Secretary-Treasurer	Mary R. Wisehart

Members at large of the Executive Committee:  
Everyl Getz, Diane Thomas,  
Marjorie Workman

#### Give a Gift

If you are not already getting *Co-Laborer*, the Free Will Baptist magazine for women, give yourself a gift. Subscribe now for only \$5.75. *Co-Laborer* subscriptions are continuous, that is they continue until you cancel your subscription. Any unused portion of the subscription price is refundable if you decide to cancel.

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## BOARD OF RETIREMENT

*Retirement and the Pastor's Pay Package*

By Ray Lewis

There was a time when salary was the main concern of a person seeking employment. Any benefits offered were just icing on the cake.

In today's society, with rising health costs and increased life expectancy, salary has become secondary. Without proper medical coverage, one major illness can be financially devastating to a family. With increased life expectancy, a person may spend up to one-third of their life in retirement. Without proper preparation, many will spend this time in poverty and misery, rather than the comfort and ease they deserve.

The average employed person today anticipates an enjoyable retirement. For the most part, employers are not leaving the preparation entirely up to the employee. Employer retirement contributions usually match or exceed those of the employee. This seems to be the story in most work places except the church.

Most churches have members who have retired from secular jobs. A large percentage of them are able to live comfortably. Many times, however, there is no one who will bring up the possibility of the church contributing toward the pastor's future retirement needs. Is this fair?

Don't you think your pastor deserves the same benefits as the members of his church? We should provide retirement benefits for our pastors. If we do not, we are derelict in our duty.

Many times a new pastor is offered a set salary package. The decision as to how to divide the package between salary and benefits is left up to him. The division is usually designed for the greatest present tax avoidance. This arrangement automatically reduces future social security benefits—thus making it even more important to provide retirement benefits apart from the salary package.

Some churches still seem to practice the old philosophy of keeping a pastor poor in order to keep him humble. Often, the salary offered is barely enough to meet current needs of the pastor and his family. There is nothing left to set aside for future needs such as retirement. Therefore, the compensation is split between salary, housing and other benefits.

Preparing for retirement is put off to a later date.

Many churches do not make such a provision, not because they don't care about the pastor, but because they do not think about the pastor retiring. Their attitude is that if God calls a man to preach, he preaches until he dies. Yet when their church is looking for a pastor they want a young man. When an older minister's name is submitted for consideration they say, "Why he's old enough to retire." I ask you, *Whose fault is it that he can't afford to retire?*

We must help our pastors. Our help should be determined solely by the pastor's personal contributions to his retirement account.

We are approaching the end of another year. Why not make a commitment this year to contribute to your pastor's retirement account. Don't ask him if he wants it; just do it. Isn't God's chosen man "worthy of his hire"?

So I ask the same question, "Should retirement benefits be part of the pastor's pay package?" I answer with a rousing, "YES!" ■

**In Honor of . . .**  
**By . . .**

**Rick Bowling**  
Martin Hill Ladies Auxiliary  
Booneville, MS

**Salome (Sadie) Salyer**  
Wilson Chapel Ladies Auxiliary  
Wise, VA

**Jim Smith**  
Esserville Woman's Auxiliary  
Wise, VA



## FOREIGN MISSIONS



## Tribute To A Submissive Servant

By R. Eugene Waddell, General Director

Evelyn Hersey was born March 2, 1930. She was the daughter of Reverend Milo and Dora Lawrence of Ozark, Ill. Her father was a General Baptist preacher. Evelyn was saved when she was 13 years of age. Later she fully committed her life to Christ and felt God calling her to be a missionary.

Since they were classmates of mine at Free Will Baptist Bible College, I had the privilege of introducing Evelyn to Fred Hersey. She graduated from FWBBC in 1954, then she and Fred were married September 9 of that year. Fred pastored in North Carolina for about a year. In 1955 the couple was appointed for missionary service in Japan. They departed in April of 1956.

Mrs. Hersey lived a quiet and consistent Christian life. She was a very serious, dedicated Christian wife and mother. Although Evelyn played the piano or organ when needed, she preferred staying in the background. But she did conduct Bible classes for women.

### *English and Cooking*

In Japan, the Herses recognized the necessity of making friends with the Japanese people in order to effectively witness to them. Since the Japanese are always anxious to learn conversational English, Evelyn made friends with some of these by teaching English conversation classes. She made good use of these contacts by using the English Bible as a textbook.

Many Japanese women are curious about how to prepare American food, so Evelyn also opened her kitchen and offered to teach those interested how they could prepare American-style meals. She was an excellent cook. She knew how to bake some delicious bread and yeast rolls. When she held cooking classes she always included a time of Bible study.

While in the hospital undergoing treat-



Missionary Evelyn Hersey

ment for cancer she felt God had given her Psalm 118:17: "I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the LORD." She never gave up her desire to live and never lost her burden for souls. Even in her weakened condition, she took advantage of the opportunity to witness to Yoko, a young Japanese neighbor, who had come to visit the Herses.

I'm convinced the seeds Evelyn Hersey sowed in Japan will continue to reap a harvest.

As Evelyn's earthly life was fading away on Monday morning, October 4, 1993, the telephone rang. When Fred answered, he recognized Mr. Murooka. This Japanese man from Iriso had heard the gospel from Fred and Evelyn many times and Evelyn had continued to pray for his conversion. He was calling to testify that he was a believer in Jesus Christ. After 45 minutes of questioning, Fred was convinced that Mr. Murooka had indeed made a commitment of himself to Christ. Soon after that confirmation, Evelyn was taken to her heavenly home.

Funeral services for this precious saint were held Wednesday, October 6, at Woodlawn Funeral Home in Nashville, Tenn. Interment was held Thursday, October 7, at Zion Cemetery near Ozark, Ill.

I believe Evelyn Hersey could be characterized as a person very submissive to the Lord. I never heard her question why she was stricken with cancer.

We will all miss Evelyn's smile and quiet commitment to Christ. Fred, the children, and the grandchildren will miss her, too. I hope everyone will continue to pray for them. ■

#### "The Evelyn Hersey Memorial Endowment Fund"

will benefit FWB ministries in Japan.

Send gifts so designated to

Free Will Baptist Foundation

P.O. Box 5002 - Antioch, TN 37011-5002



# TEEN SCENE

## ATTENTION HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS!

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DO YOU WANT TO MEET NEW PEOPLE AND GO NEW PLACES?

WE HAVE A PLAN THAT COULD CHANGE YOUR LIFE!

### THE 1994 TRUTH & PEACE LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE



JOIN US AS WE EXAMINE  
*DAVID, AND ESTHER.*  
SECRET TO SUCCESS AND  
BEHIND THEIR STRENGTH AND COURAGE.

THE LIVES OF *DANIEL*,  
WE'LL LEARN THEIR  
THE MOTIVATION

This conference is designed for 10th, 11th, and 12th graders who are interested in studying God's Word, fine-tuning their leadership skills, and learning to serve and minister for the Free Will Baptist denomination.

The 1994 conference, sponsored by the Youth Ministries Division of Randall House Publications, represents the 11th year of quality training and leadership development. Hundreds of young men and women have been influenced and equipped by Truth and Peace. Many are now serving as pastors, youth pastors, missionaries, nurses, teachers, and business leaders.

The three-week conference begins July 4 and will conclude at the National Youth Conference in Little Rock, Arkansas. Space is limited to 72 participants. For a detailed brochure and application kit, please write to:

**Truth and Peace**  
**P.O. Box 17306**  
**Nashville, TN 37217**  
**or call (615) 361-1221 ext. 344.**

*(Be sure to include your name, address, phone number, and grade.)*



## Husbands and Wives (part 3)

I Corinthians 7:25-31



Robert E. Picirilli

**A**fter a kind of digression (vv. 17-24) Paul turns back more directly to his subject, only with a somewhat different twist. Whereas he has been speaking primarily to married people, now he turns his attention to the unmarried believers at Corinth—probably still responding to questions that had been communicated to him.

1. The subject: “virgins” (v. 25a). Questions may have arisen because the customs of the time called for parents to arrange for the marriage of their daughters.
2. The nature of Paul’s teaching (vv. 25b-26). Since he recalls no teaching of the Lord Jesus on this matter, he gives his own, inspired judgment (literally, “mind”), as in v. 12. In v. 40 Paul will affirm his understanding that in giving his “mind” he is giving the mind of the Spirit of God. Here he assures the readers that he speaks as one who faithfully fulfills a position entrusted to him by God.

Furthermore, Paul emphasizes that what he is about to teach is *good*. “I suppose” means “I consider, account, reckon.” And what is “good” does not necessarily mean an absolute rule but may indicate what is wisest and best.

Paul seems to prefer remaining unmarried to marriage, here, but we must understand this in the light of the basic principle he has already laid down in vv. 1-5. When he advises remaining unmarried, therefore, he is doing so for those who have that gift.

3. The content of Paul’s teaching concerns the question, *To marry or not?* (vv. 27-28). Three “good” things are stated.
  - a. One married (“bound to a wife”) should not seek divorce

(“to be loosed”).

- b. One (literally) “having been loosed / freed” from a wife should not seek one. The narrower, grammatical understanding applies this only to men formerly married and now truly freed from that bond—by widowhood, certainly, and perhaps by the kind of divorce mentioned in v. 15.
- c. One free to marry may do so without sinning, as applied to the man just addressed in v. 17b (“thou”) or to a virgin. But such a person who could fulfill the “good” preference of v. 8, and marries instead, will have “trouble”—a word (Greek *thlipsis*) that means pressure or affliction—in this fleshly, earthly existence. Paul probably means the added pressures that marriage brings.
4. The reasons behind Paul’s teaching (vv. 26, 29) are two.
  - a. “For (=because of) the present distress” (v. 26) raises a question. Is Paul referring to some (unexplained) special set of circumstances or crisis then occurring? Or is he speaking eschatologically of the building distress of our age as we wait for the return of Christ?
  - b. “The time is short” (v. 29) apparently refers to the time we have to serve the Lord before the end; the statement that “the fashion of this world is passing away” (v. 31) tends to support both this and the eschatological understanding of “the present distress.”
5. The Christian’s prevailing attitude (vv. 29-31) whether married or

not. Paul lived with a sense that the Lord Jesus was soon to come. So should we. Apparently his main concern, therefore, was that we should let nothing interfere with or hinder us in wholehearted devotion and service to the Lord and in preparing for His return. In this light, Paul gives five examples.

- a. Those married should be as though they were not. While such a person will still love and attend to the needs of the mate, he or she should wait on the Lord with the same earnestness of one unmarried.
- b. Those weeping over some this-worldly loss must not let that grief displace devotion to Christ and His cause.
- c. Likewise those rejoicing over something related to this age must temper their joy with the concerns of the age to come.
- d. Those buying and profiting in trade must not err in thinking that such gains match the laying up of treasure in heaven.
- e. Those who make any use at all of the things of this world must not overuse it as though it were the meaning of life.

By comparison with the kingdom of God, then, all these things—including marriage—mean nothing. Such activities belong to the course of this world-order that is passing away. Our questions about marriage, then, and all our decisions must be subordinated to that great truth. ■



# Index

## Volume 40

### January - December 1993

KEY TO INDEX: Articles, authors, columns and Newsfront items are arranged in three separate divisions.

In part one, articles are listed in order of title, author, issue and number of the page on which they appear. The author's division is alphabetized according to last

names. Columns are listed in chronological order. The Newsfront index is alphabetized in six main sections: churches, ministers, laymen, state ministries, national ministries and other.

—Compiled by *Contact* Staff

<b>A</b>		
AIDS: Open Door to Ministry; Paul Harrison	May, 10	
Apostasy; Daryl Ellis	March, 6	
At the Feet of Darryl Willis; Bryan Pate	October, 16	
<b>B</b>		
Beyond the Yawn;		
Jonathan and Yvonne Thigpen	March, 10	
Broken Heart, A; William S. Deal	February, 9	
<b>C</b>		
Calling a Pastor; Bob Shockey	November, 8	
Calvary Riders, The; Tom Carlson	July, 18	
Changing Face of Missions, The; Bill Jones	April, 6	
Christianity and the Rotary-Dial Telephone;		
Paul V. Harrison	November, 13	
Christmas and the Lord's Prayer;		
R. F. Smith, Jr.	December, 9	
Clocks and Calendars; R. F. Smith, Jr.	March, 17	
Convention Resolutions;	September, 14	
<b>D</b>		
Day Like No Other, The; William C. Hess	August, 17	
Dear Dad . . . ; Jason Turner	June, 10	
Do We Have the Right to Do Wrong?		
James A. Ritchie	October, 20	
Do We Need a Free Will Baptist 800 Number?		
Mal King	February, 8	
Dousing Burnout; Kenneth Musko	August, 18	
Dream Continues, The; Roger C. Reeds	January, 16	
Dynamics of Forgiveness, The;		
David Aycock	December, 11	
<b>E</b>		
Education—the Way it Used to Be;		
Grant Endicott	February, 4	
<b>F</b>		
Fire Burns; Paul Harrison	July, 10	
Forgotten Ministry, The; Kenneth Pell	January, 6	
Free Will Baptist Unity; Jeff Crabtree	July, 4	
Front Yard Missionary, The; Tom Willey	April, 4	
<b>G</b>		
God of the Second Chance; Jim Mullen	August, 16	
<b>H</b>		
He Needed a Hand; David Taylor	December, 13	
Helping Hurting Kids; Paul Borthwick	December, 14	
Hero of Slocum Station; Neil Gilliland	June, 8	
Homesick Missionary, The; Rebecca Franks	April, 13	
How to Handle Conflict; Clarence Burton	October, 12	
Hurricane! Anne Worthington	January, 12	
<b>I</b>		
I Am a Free Will Baptist Because . . . ;		
Damon C. Dodd	July, 8	
I Don't Regret a Mile; Ralph Staten	March, 8	
I Remember Pop Willey; Billy A. Melvin	April, 10	
Instant of Understanding, An;		
Dennis E. Hensley	February, 12	
It Could be Habit-Forming; Carol Reid	February, 6	
<b>J</b>		
Just Another Day; Carol Pinkerton	April, 12	
<b>K</b>		
Keeping the Church on Track;		
Leroy Forlines	October, 8	
<b>L</b>		
Learning to Pray; Stuart Briscoe	March, 14	
Lessons Mother Taught Me; David Copeland	May, 14	



"Lord, I'm Afraid"; Helen McAllister November, 5  
 Loving Husband, The; June, 11  
 Loving Wife, The; May, 14

**M**  
 Me! Debt Free! Eddie Ary August, 7  
 Meet the Church Needs of Children in  
 Christian Schools; A. James Heynen January, 14  
 My Father, My Teacher; J. Reford Wilson June, 4

**N**  
 New Age Nightmare, The; Bob L. Thomas October, 4  
 New Pastorate, The; David Taylor February, 16  
 Nine Ways to Improve Your Marriage;  
 David Burgess January, 18  
 No Second-Class Christians;  
 Larry M. Montgomery October, 14  
 North Star of Life, The; Paul Harrison December, 10

**P**  
 Pansy Tough; Joshua Butler October, 17  
 Pastor, Your Job *Is* Important;  
 Charles A. Thigpen August, 6  
 Pastor's 1040, The; Rick Jaggers March, 4  
 Playing Hardball; Randy Corn August, 9  
 Prayer for Help; M. J. Pritchard March, 17  
 Price of Freedom, The; David Taylor July, 14  
 Prodigal Son, The; Diane Mitchell Thomas April, 14  
 Program, National Association June, 19  
 Program, NYC June, 23  
 Program, WNAC June, 25  
 Pups and Preachers; Randy Moore August, 12

**R**  
 Reason to Live, A; Marsha Gallardo July, 12  
 Reason to Live, A; Jonathan Reeves July, 12  
 Return to My Olde Kentucky Home;  
 Marilyn Pritchard May, 4

**S**  
 Seven Hints for Child-Rearing;  
 David Burgess March, 16  
 Shotgun Christmas; Michael G. Garner December, 8  
 Smile and a Petunia, A; M. J. Pritchard July, 30  
 Snakes and Prayers;  
 Kathy Tippet Henderson March, 13  
 Special Role of the Free Will Baptist Pastor;  
 Dave Nobles August, 4  
 Spotless; Pamela Eccleston October, 17  
 Stanley; Roger C. Reeds July, 16  
 Stones and Such; R. F. Smith, Jr. January, 7  
 Storm Jesus Would Not Calm, The;

Walter Clinton November, 11  
 Strategies for Youth Evangelism; Billy Bevan May, 12

**T**  
 Take A Stand; Dean Jones September, 20  
 Teen Point of View, A; Jill Goodfellow July, 6  
 Ten Books . . . Every Pastor Should Own;  
 Kenneth Walker August, 10  
 Ten-Speed Knight, The; Patti Richards June, 6  
 That's Not the Question! David Fite November, 16  
 That's Thanksgiving; R. F. Smith, Jr. November, 7  
 There's a Better Way; Robert J. Morgan March, 12  
 This Can't Be Love! Kevin Skiles February, 10  
 Time of Grace, A Time of Giving, A;  
 Melissa Riddle September, 18  
 Together in Louisville; Thomas Marberry September, 4  
 Tracing Your Spiritual Genealogy;  
 C. Timothy Franklin November, 14  
 Transition Potholes; David Joslin January, 8  
 Treat Temptation with Respect;  
 Wade Parker January, 9  
 Twelve Money-Saving Tips for Christmas;  
 Sandra Atwood December, 5

**U**  
 "Under-Wear and Tear" of Youth Ministry, The;  
 Michael Hollifield July, 11  
 Unplanned Pregnancies; Wade Jernigan October, 21

**V**  
 Verbally-Abused Woman, The;  
 Margaret Frondorf January, 10

**W**  
 We Went to a Meeting; Delma Gunnels February, 15  
 What in the World Happened to the Church?  
 Clifford Donoho November, 6  
 What's Good about Our National Master's Men Work?  
 Thurman Pate, Jr. October, 6  
 When Parents Divorce;  
 Tony Campolo and Gary Sprague October, 18  
 Where No Angels Tread; David Messer January, 4  
 Who Do You Think You Are?  
 Bruce Robertson February, 14  
 Who Owns Christmas? Edwin Hayes December, 4  
 Why God's People are Stressed Out;  
 David L. Burgess October, 10  
 Why I Am a Home Missionary; J. L. Gore November, 4  
 Why So Long and So Much?  
 Ken Eagleton, Sr. April, 8  
 Why We Are Total Abstainers;  
 Ralph Hampton August, 14

# Merry Christmas!



## Editorials

### Briefcase

The Resolve to Resolve	January, 31
The Barnabas People	February, 31
The Higher Call	March, 31
Why is Foreign Missions so <i>Foreign</i> ?	April, 31
The Million-Dollar Letter	May, 31
The Problem with Fathering	June, 31
The Green Bird Escape	July, 31
Ten Ways to Make Your Pastor Better	August, 31
The Seven Secrets of Leadership	September, 31
Who Prays for Bill?	October, 31
Positively Thankful!	November, 31
Santa at the Altar	December, 31

### The Secretary Speaks

Personal Participation	January, 3
Offering for the Office	February, 3
Gift Goals	March, 3
Designated Days	April, 3
Congenial in Conflict	May, 3
Try Laboring Together	June, 3
Take Care of Business	July, 3
Perils of the Pastorate	August, 3
Lessons from Louisville	September, 3
Missing Men	October, 3
Obedience: Our Obligation	November, 3
Share the Story	December, 3

## Columns

### Green Tree Bible Study

The Sin of Sodom; Genesis 19	January, 27
Sodom Revisited: Homosexuality and the Mosaic Law	February, 28
Homosexuality: Natural or Unnatural? Romans 1:24-27	March, 27

Homosexuality, the Kingdom of God and Deliverance; I Corinthians 6:9-11	April, 29
Qualifications for a Pastor; I Timothy 3:1-7	May, 29
Qualifications for a Deacon; I Timothy 3:8-12	August, 28
Husbands and Wives (part 1); I Corinthians 7:1-9	October, 28
Husbands and Wives (part 2); I Corinthians 7:10-16	November, 28
Husbands and Wives (part 3); I Corinthians 7:25-31	December, 25

### Top Shelf

How to Rescue the Earth Without Worshipping Nature; Tony Campolo	January, 28
Acts (The New American Commentary, Vol. 26); John B. Polhill	February, 29
He Came to Set the Captives Free; Rebecca Brown, M.D.	March, 28
Evangelical Affirmations; Kenneth S. Kantzer and Carl F. H. Henry, eds.	April, 30
The Randall House Bible Commentary, James; I, II Peter; and Jude; Paul V. Harrison and Robert E. Picirilli	May, 28
Journal of Benjamin Randall, The; Roy Thomas, editor	June, 30
Marriage: Questions Women Ask; Gloria Gaither, Gigi Graham Tchivdjan and Susan Alexander Yates	July, 29
The Exiles; Robert Wise	August, 29
A Faith that Endures; J. Dwight Pentecost	September, 30
Help from Above; C. R. Resener	October, 29
The Wonderful Spirit-Filled Life; Charles Stanley	November, 26

### Authors' Index

Ary, Eddie	August, 7
Atwood, Sandra	December, 5
Aycock, David	December, 11
Bevan, Billy	May, 12
Borthwick, Paul	December, 14
Briscoe, Stuart	March, 14
Burgess, David	January, 18; March, 16
	October, 10
Burton, Clarence	October, 12
Butler, Joshua	October, 17
Campolo, Tony and Gary Sprague	October, 18
Carlson, Tom	July, 18
Clinton, Walter	November, 11
Copeland, David	May, 14
Corn, Randy	August, 9
Crabtree, Jeff	July, 4
Deal, William S.	February, 9
Dodd, Damon C.	July, 8
Donoho, Clifford	November, 6

Eagleton, Sr., Ken	April, 8
Eccleston, Pamela	October, 17
Ellis, Daryl	March, 6
Endicott, Grant	February, 4
Fite, David	November, 16
Forlines, Leroy	October, 8
Franklin, C. Timothy	November, 14
Franks, Rebecca	April, 13
Frondorf, Margaret	January, 10
Gallardo, Marsha	July, 12
Garner, Michael G.	December, 8
Gilliland, Neil	June, 8
Goodfellow, Jill	July, 6
Gore, J. L.	November, 4
Gunnels, Delma	February, 15
Hampton, Ralph	August, 14
Harrison, Paul	May, 10; July, 10;
	November, 13; December, 10
Hayes, Edwin	December, 4
Henderson, Kathy Tippet	March, 13
Hensley, Dennis E.	February, 12

Hess, William C.	August, 17
Heynen, A. James	January, 14
Hollifield, Michael	July, 11
Jaggers, Rick	March, 4
Jernigan, Wade	October, 21
Jones, Bill	April, 6
Jones, Dean	September, 20
Joslin, David	January, 8
King, Mal	February, 8
Marberry, Thomas	September, 4
McAllister, Helen	November, 5
Melvin, Billy A.	April, 10
Messer, David	January, 4
Montgomery, Larry M.	October, 14
Moore, Randy	August, 12
Morgan, Robert J.	March, 12
Mullen, Jim	August, 16
Musko, Kenneth	August, 18
Nobles, Dave	August, 4
Parker, Wade	January, 9
Pate, Bryan	October, 16



## Department Pages

### Foreign Missions

Changed Through the Bible! Roíco Suarez	February, 27
Give It All Away; Geneva Poole	April, 26
If You Could Only Know . . .; Mark Cowart	June, 27
Toward AD 2000; Don Robirds	August, 24
Marbles; Carol Pinkerton	October, 27
Tribute to a Submissive Servant; R. Eugene Waddell	December, 23

### Free Will Baptist Bible College

Test Proves Quality of FWBBC Education; Robert Picirilli	January, 26
Reaching Nashville's Spanish Community; José Rodriguez	March, 24
Flames Enjoy Best Season; Bert Tippet	May, 23
Give Your Children What They Need; Kenny Simpson	July, 28
The Power of a Verse; Bert Tippet	September, 28
Everyone Has a Story; John Murray	November, 23

### Free Will Baptist Foundation

Achieving Your Goals with a Trust; William W. Evans	March, 25
When Does a Woman Need A Will?	May, 24
What is Estate Planning? William W. Evans	July, 25
National Ministries Offering (in other letters, NMO); William Evans	September, 29
Gifts That May Benefit the Donor; David Brown	November, 24

### Home Missions

Target City Update; Roy Thomas	January, 24
Has Roll Call Sunday Helped? Roy Thomas	March, 26
First "Together Way Plan" Effort Succeeds! Roy Thomas	May, 25
Home Missions Promotes Evangelism; Roy Thomas	July, 26
Heritage Tour Winners Enjoy Trip; Roy Thomas	September, 27
Remembering Our Roots; Roy Thomas	November, 25

### Master's Men

Sponsor a Day's Ministry	February, 24
Layman of the Year 1992 Nomination Form	April, 27

### Randall House

You Are Needed!	January, 25
Where are the Children? Billy Brown	March, 23
Bible and You, The; Herbert Waid	May, 26
Meeting Your Sunday School Needs	July, 27
Thanks a Lot . . .; Roger C. Reeds	November, 22

### Retirement and Insurance

Prepare Now for Retirement; D. Ray Lewis	February, 26
Do You Really Want to Retire Early?	April, 25
Thank You, Herman . . .; William W. Evans	June, 26
State and District Associations Make Contributions to Retirement Plan; David Brown	August, 26
Are Parsonages Obsolete? David L. Brown	October, 26
Retirement and the Pastor's Pay Package; Ray Lewis	December, 22

### Women Nationally Active for Christ

Woman's Window on the World; Mary R. Wisheart	February, 25
Woman's Window on the World; Mary R. Wisheart	April, 24
Woman's Window on the World; Mary R. Wisheart	June, 28
Woman's Window on the World; Mary R. Wisheart	August, 25
Woman's Window on the World; Mary R. Wisheart	October, 25
Woman's Window on the World; Mary R. Wisheart	December, 21

Pate, Jr., Thurman	October, 6
Pell, Kenneth	January, 6
Pinkerton, Carol	April, 12
Pritchard, M. J.	March, 17; May, 4; July, 30
Reeds, Roger C.	January, 16; July, 16
Reeves, Jonathan	July, 12
Reid, Carol	February, 6
Richards, Patti	June, 6
Riddle, Melissa	September, 18
Ritchie, James A.	October, 20
Robertson, Bruce	February, 14
Shockey, Bob	November, 8
Skiles, Kevin	February, 10
Smith, Jr., R. F.	January, 7; March, 17; November, 7; December, 9
Staten, Ralph	March, 8

Taylor, David	February, 16; July, 14; December, 13
Thigpen, Charles A.	August, 6
Thigpen, Jonathan and Yvonne	March, 10
Thomas, Bob L.	October, 4
Thomas, Diane Mitchell	April, 14
Turner, Jason	June, 10
Walker, Kenneth	August, 10
Willey, Tom	April, 4
Wilson, J. Reford	June, 4
Worthington, Anne	January, 12

Season's  
Greetings  
from  
the  
Contact  
Staff



## Newsfront

### Churches

Arizona	
First FWB Church, Tucson	July, 22
Missouri	
New Home FWB Church, Hartville	December, 17
North Carolina	
First FWB Church, Raleigh	January, 21
Mt. Calvary FWB Church, Hookerton	July, 20
Oklahoma	
Grace FWB Church, Broken Arrow	March, 20
Tennessee	
Goodlettsville FWB Church, Goodlettsville	July, 21
Pardue Memorial, Clarksville	November, 20
Virginia	
First FWB Church, Richmond	July, 22

### Ministers

Barker, Vernon P.	October, 22
Braddy, Joe	April, 19
Brunkhorst, George	April, 20
Cox, H. Z.	November, 18
Dodd, Damon	May, 19
Fry, Malcolm	October, 22
Gibbs, John	July, 23
Hamilton, Thomas	July, 21
Hensley, Otis	December, 19
Howell, Danny	December, 18
Presley, Jerry	December, 18
Rice, Jr., James B. (J. B.)	December, 19
Stone, Dean	November, 19
Summerson, Jim	July, 20
Taylor, Fred	September, 22
Teets, Merlin	June, 13
Thigpen, Jonathan	February, 17
Weaver, Ralph	January, 22

### Lay People

Farley, Elbert	August, 20
Stanley, I. L.	December, 17
Thorpe, George R.	October, 23

### States

Alabama	January, 22
Arizona	July, 21
Arkansas	November, 19
California	August, 20
Florida	August, 20
Georgia	February, 18
Illinois	June, 13
Kentucky	September, 24
Louisiana	April, 22
Michigan	August, 21
Mississippi	January, 19
Missouri	September, 23
New Mexico	July, 22
Ohio	May, 20; September, 22
Oklahoma	January, 20; March, 21; November, 20
South Carolina	May, 20
Tennessee	February, 18
Texas	September, 23
Virginia	January, 19; October, 23
West Virginia	September, 24

### National Ministries

All-Boards Conference Recommends Disclosure	February, 20
Arkansas Steering Committee Meets	November, 18
Bible College Adds New Programs	April, 20
Bible College Spring Enrollment Up	April, 19
California Company Gives FWBBC Roses	August, 22
Discount Air Fares to National Convention	April, 21; May, 19
Enlargement Campaign Spurs Growth	August, 21

Fall Enlargement Campaign Logs Increase	March, 20
Fifty in Bible College Graduation	August, 21
Four Hundred Nineteen Attend Bible College Welcome Days	June, 12
FWBBC Discontinues Graduate Program	January, 21
FWBBC Enrollment Tops 334	November, 18
FWBBC Offers Tape Series	May, 21
FWBBC Scholarship Fund Receives \$2,000 Matching Gift	April, 21
FWBBC Sets Spring Conference	February, 17
Leadership Conference Set for December	November, 20
1993 State Association Meetings	February, 22
Picirilli Named AABC President-Elect	January, 19
Record Number Attend FWBBC Welcome Days	February, 18
16 from FWBBC Make <i>Who's Who</i>	January, 22
Wade Trimble, Contractor, Dies of Cancer	March, 19

### Other

Braddy Family Establishes Scholarships	July, 20
Camping Personnel Plan Get-Together	February, 19
Canada Convention	October, 23
Christian Schools Meet	May, 20
Hillsdale Wins Accreditation	October, 22
Mexican Convention	October, 23
S.E. Spring Conference	January, 20
S.E. College Graduation	April, 21
S.E. Enrolls 93	November, 20
S.E. Sets Mission Conference	September, 24
Tulsa Churches Rally	March, 19

**Pray for the**  
**1993 Leadership Conference**  
**Meeting December 6-7**  
**at the**  
**Doubletree Hotel, Nashville, Tennessee**



## Santa at the Altar



Jack Williams

**I**t was the Sunday night before Christmas and all through the community not a parent was home, because they were all at our church chuckling as the Primary and Junior Sunday School classes struggled mightily through their version of the Christmas drama. Then I preached my Christmas sermon to 127 restless relatives.

The lambs leaned back against the piano watching me. I managed to step around the hooves of two brown-eyed cows wearing their dads' hunting coats. Mary, Joseph and six shepherds tugged at their long striped bathrobes. Three angels with bent halos looked on moderately bored.

No one responded to the invitation. I should've known better than give one, I suppose. Who wants to wade to the altar through a barnyard? At any rate, I finished and thanked the people for coming. Nobody remembers my sermon because . . .

**Just as I was about to** pronounce the benediction, the back door banged open and a voice shouted, "Ho! Ho! Ho! Merry Christmas!" Yep, it was Santa himself, decked out in a bright red suit, whiskers, a stocking cap and somebody's pillow.

My mouth dropped open. I was stunned. Then Santa bounded down the carpeted aisle ho-ho-ho-ing to one and all. To this day I don't know if he tripped over his own feet or if one of our "cows" hooked him.

**The next thing I knew**, everyone in the building was howling with laughter because old Santa and his sack of rooty-toot-toots sprawled willy-nilly and rolled just short of the altar. I began looking for a place to hide. There wasn't one.

When the good deacons finally sorted it all out, a very embarrassed and somewhat subdued Santa Claus distributed candy treats, apples and oranges to anyone who could stop laughing long enough to hold out his hand. Somehow, that event sort of took the edge off everything that we'd tried to do.

**Was it really funny?** Yeah, now. But definitely not to me then. In those four or five seconds between the back door opening and the fur ball rolling down the aisle, I clearly knew that whatever else was happening, *this* did not belong in our church.

Something withered inside me. I've never felt the same toward men in red suits. And it hasn't got a thing to do with the fact that nobody remembers my sermon.

The church is a place of truth for all seasons, not fiction or fairy tales. The Christmas story is exciting enough without mucking it up with chubby comics. The church has more to offer.

**There's a compelling** simplicity about the Christmas story. The Bible tells it in straightforward, no-nonsense language—a stable, some animals, a newborn Child, wise men, angels, shepherds. Most folks struggle to unravel what the Bible means on the subject of eschatology, but I've never heard of anyone who couldn't figure out the Christmas story. It's that simple. That's the way God told it; that's the way we should tell it.

**There's a potent drawing** power in the Christmas story. Many people fear to approach the God of justice and holiness and righteousness. Nobody hesitates to examine a newborn baby. And when we do study the Child, we suddenly find ourselves staring deep into the eyes

of God—and mercy and hope and peace and laughter and goodness.

**The re-telling** of the Christmas story never loses its appeal to listeners. It calls forth from each of us that which is noble and vulnerable and sensitive. Sometimes, those who tell it best are the children who muffle their lines, stumble over flannel robes and bend their wings. Truth wrapped like swaddling cloth around a Child is truth that anybody can understand.

**There's a majesty** about the Christmas story. The most exhilarating music that musicians can compose finds its expression in the sounds of Christmas. From "O Little Town of Bethlehem" to hushed "Silent Night" to Handel's thundering "Hallelujah Chorus," the music of Christmas touches greatness in a day of the ordinary and mundane.

**There's rock-solid theology** behind the Christmas story. The doctrine of the incarnation sweeps across a troubled world shouting, "God is with us!" It's the culmination of 4,000 years of fulfilled promises. The day that God became a man divided time and marked the beginning of something wonderful. It's a doctrine that great minds grapple to understand, that the world's grandest orators extol.

**No, sir, that rumpled Santa** skidding toward the altar scattering trinkets is not the Christmas story. Christmas truth still sets the captive free, still binds up the broken-hearted, still shines from that star above Bethlehem. That's the real story of Christmas.

What story do you tell at Christmas? ■



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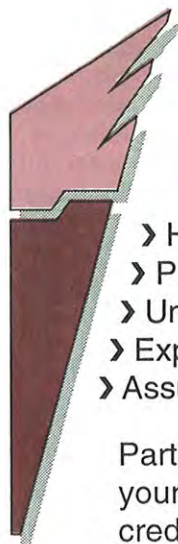
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Free Will Baptist Bible College's  
Paul J. Ketteman Memorial  
Christmas Fund Drive

*What are you doing  
for Christmas?*

PROJECT GOAL: \$250,000



*What your Christmas gift will do...*

- › Help the Bible College train Christian leaders for the 21st Century.
- › Provide an adequate campus for students to learn and grow.
- › Underwrite the cost of FWBBC's current new accreditation effort.
- › Expand the curriculum to provide new programs of training.
- › Assure more pastors and missionaries for future service.

Participate in the Ketteman Memorial Christmas Drive—personally and through your church—this year. All gifts received by the college in December will be credited to the drive.

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Nashville, Tennessee 37205