

DECEMBER 1996

# CONTACT

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE  
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF  
FREE WILL BAPTISTS

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## Christmas Far from Home

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## A Wildcatter Christmas

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## Christmas in Paradise

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## Hambones and Limb Loppers



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DECEMBER 1996

VOLUME 43, NO. 12

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**Editor:** Jack Williams  
**Editorial Assistant:** Marilyn Pritchard  
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## When God Gives

**T**he Christian concept of Christmas differs sharply from that of those who have not embraced the gospel. While this season is celebrated in many parts of the world with no semblance to the truth taught in scripture, Christmas gives Christians a unique opportunity to correctly celebrate the message and meaning. Christmas reflects, reaffirms and reminds us of the following facts.

### God Gave

#### The Sovereign gave His Son.

John declares, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved," (John 3:16-17).

Paul reminds us of this truth in Galatians 4:4-5 when he writes, "But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons."

#### The Son gave Himself.

Paul addresses this timely truth when he states, "Grace be to you, and peace, from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen," (Galatians 1:3-5).

### God Gives

#### God Gives Grace.

God's amazing grace is always sufficiently abundant to sustain, satisfy and supply all our needs.

Grace finds us. God seeks human beings. The record of Adam and Eve's sin in Genesis 3 confirms the fact that they

hid from God and God sought them. Paul emphasizes this truth when he states that none are righteous and none seek God. Through grace, God seeks lost people and draws them to Himself.

Grace frees us. Romans 6 emphasizes the truth that those who have been redeemed, who are saved by God's grace are freed from the dominion of sin. Paul emphatically declares that those who are dead to sin are freed from sin.

Grace fashions us. Paul reminds us of this fact when he says, "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them," (Ephesians 2:10). The will of God is that Christians be conformed into the image of Christ.

Grace focuses us. Paul reflects, "And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecution, in distress for Christ's sake: for when I am weak then am I strong," (II Corinthians 12:9-10).

#### God Gives Gifts.

All Christians have not been gifted the same. God gives gifts to the Body of Christ as He wills.

James says, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights,

with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning," (James 1:17).

Paul declares, "So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us..." (Romans 12:5-6).

#### God Gives Guidance.

Throughout the scriptures, Christians are promised that God will lead and guide them. Proverbs 3:5-6 admonishes, "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths."

The psalmist declared, "Order my steps in thy word: and let not any iniquity have dominion over me," (Psalm 119:133).

### God Glorifies

Through the salvation and service of human beings, God brings honor and glory to Himself.

Paul affirms this truth when he declares, "In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory..." The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power..." (Ephesians 1:13-14, 18-19).

A biblical concept of Christmas will impact the who, why and what celebrating Christmas is all about. We have an obligation and opportunity to set a high and holy standard for the Christian Christmas celebration. ■



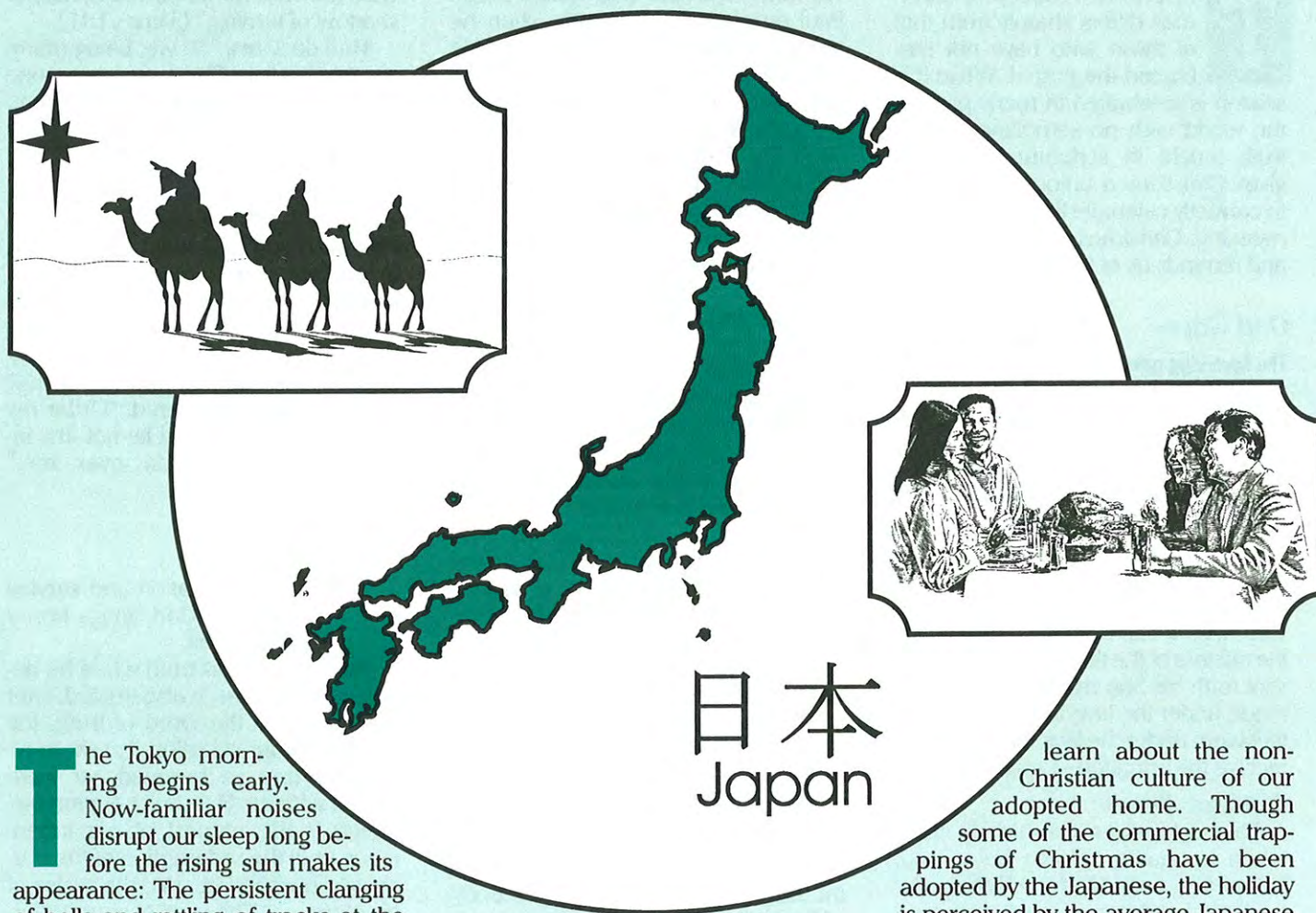
Melvin Worthington

### The Secretary's Schedule

- Dec. 2-3** Leadership Conference  
Nashville, TN
- Dec. 4-5** Executive Committee Meeting  
Nashville, TN
- Dec. 16-17** Directors' Retreat  
Chapel Hill, TN

# Christmas Far from Home

By Ruth McDonald



**T**he Tokyo morning begins early. Now-familiar noises disrupt our sleep long before the rising sun makes its appearance: The persistent clanging of bells and rattling of tracks at the nearby train station. The footsteps of neighbors above as they begin their morning routine. The annoying wail of street vendors selling their wares.

We arise and part the curtains of our third-story apartment window. On the sidewalk below, sleep-deprived businessmen are scurrying to the station. Uniformed students bicycle to their places of learning. On the balconies facing ours, apron-clad housewives busily hang out laundry while toddlers amuse themselves at their mothers' feet.

A typical Tokyo morning and time to begin our own morning routine—But wait! No, it can't possibly be! But it is! Though the teeming masses of Tokyo continue business as usual, this morning is no typical morning. It is, after all, December 25, 1986, and our first Christmas far, far from home.

## Christmas in Japanese Society

As two American kids who grew up singing, "It's Christmas Time All Over the World," we've had a lot to

learn about the non-Christian culture of our adopted home. Though some of the commercial trappings of Christmas have been adopted by the Japanese, the holiday is perceived by the average Japanese as no more relevant than Valentine's Day or Halloween—an interesting foreign custom to borrow and observe.

About 75 years ago, we're told, Japanese department stores deemed it a good idea to decorate for and promote the Christmas season. Trees, lights and Santas appear in late fall and parents are encouraged to buy a toy for their tot. Bakeries and confectioners also contribute to the season by advertising beautiful little Christmas cakes.

Kentucky Fried Chicken should

win the award for most successful Christmas advertising. In the spirit of American TV, their ads feature American families gathering for their traditional holiday feast of —what else?— Kentucky Fried Chicken!

In the typical Japanese home, the immediate family gathers on Christmas Eve for chicken, cake and a single present for each child in the home. Period. The next morning, they return to life as previously scheduled.

Of course we knew Japan's was a culture based on Buddha, not Christ. A land of 30 million gods, not one God who sent His Son to redeem a lost world. That was, in essence, why we came. But not until that first Christmas did we feel the difference a non-Christian foundation makes. Why should the birthday of Jesus Christ, the founder of Christianity, be a holiday in a non-Christian land?

The calendar stands as testimony to the society's refusal to acknowledge the significance of Christ. While ours marks days and years in relation to this great historical event, the Japanese calendar measures by the imperial reign.

Our first Japanese Christmas was not, in fact, acknowledged as 1986, but as the 61st year of Emperor Hirohito's reign. And upon his death, the birthday of his son (the next emperor) became a national holiday. So now on December 23 each year, schools and offices close in solemn observance of the emperor's birthday. But two days later, the birthday of the King of kings and Lord of lords passes with little notice.

### Christmas in Japanese Churches

Japanese believers, however, see Christmas as a wonderful opportunity to tell all who will listen about the newborn King. Sunday School Christmas pageants, Christmas dinners, parties for English classes, concerts and Christmas Eve candlelight services are common to churches in Japan. And, surprisingly, they are well-attended by curious friends, relatives and contacts.

At first, we really missed the American-style church Christmas. We've never sung in a Christmas cantata in Japan—indeed, most churches are not large enough to have a choir, and most Japanese are unfamiliar with “famil-

iar” Christmas carols. With the Japanese believers in charge, the candles may be blue, yellow, pink or purple. The Christmas feast will likely be some variety of sushi or *seki-han*, a rice-bean dish common for celebrations.

But, oh, the joy of watching little children dressed as angels and shepherds, of viewing the oriental Mary cradle her newborn Son. What a privilege to share the biblical account of Jesus' birth, life, death and resurrection with groups of English students, neighbors or nursing home residents. What a heart-warming experience to meet by candlelight with members of Christ's universal church, hear the prophet Isaiah's words ring out in another language, and reverently sing praises to the God who redeems the nations.

The Christmas season is definitely the Japanese church's busiest and most demanding time of the year. But in many ways, it is also one of the most fulfilling and fruitful. Japanese converts particularly like to be baptized on a day they deem significant—a birthday or holiday of some sort. It's a special privilege, indeed, to see a new babe in Christ take this first step at Christmas.

### Christmas in the Missionary's Home

Though society never slows its pace and we are weary from the spiritual and physical demands of the season, we always make Christmas a “big deal” in our home. Since moving to the northern island of Hokkaido in 1988, we have enjoyed gathering with our other Free Will Baptist missionaries to celebrate this most special of days.

Sometime in the fall, we draw names for our adult gift exchange. MK's (missionary kids) look forward to receiving gifts from all the other missionaries, who they affectionately refer to as “Aunt” and “Uncle.”

Also in the fall, we decide who will cook what delicacy for our traditional Christmas feast. The one responsible for the turkey must search out an import meat market and order early. The one responsible for pies may write to a stateside friend and request pecans and Karo syrup, not available in Japan. Or they may decide on pumpkin pie and begin by going to the local grocery store or market to purchase a pumpkin.

The one who brings homemade rolls is usually a favorite at our “family” gathering. Somehow the fact that we don't run to Kroger to buy everything on our list makes those Christmas dinners the most delicious of all. It just tastes better to truly appreciative taste buds that have planned, pre-ordered and prepared for weeks ahead.

On Hokkaido we never fail to have a beautiful white Christmas. As colleagues enter the home, stamping the snow from their boots and bearing packages and delicacies for the day's festivities, it's hard to recall what it is we're supposed to be missing out on. Of course we do miss our families back home, but we also recall the promise to those who give up family for Christ's sake and the gospel's and we thank Him for this new “family” He's given us to enjoy.

And, after all, Christmas is not the trappings of society, the decorations or the food. Without all of these, it is in fact easier to remember the true meaning of the birth of Christ and personalize the message of the nativity. On that very first Tokyo Christmas, the Lord gave us a special, illuminated verse to ponder in our hearts each time we feel homesick and far away from home. “And they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.” With us always, even to the end of the world. ■



ABOUT THE WRITER: Mrs. Ruth McDonald is a Free Will Baptist foreign missionary to Japan along with her husband, Don and their three children.

# A Wildcatter Christmas

By Wade Jernigan



If I learned anything while in the oil patch, it's that oil field wildcaters seldom announced themselves. Most always they were secretive, almost shadowy. Definitely an independent sort, doing simply what was necessary to accomplish the dream. Not much fuss was made about the matter of whom. Just make the oil flow.

There's a striking similarity here—the oil patch wildcatter and the pulpit wildcatter.

## On the Rig

From straight out of the north, a howling wind fueled by winter's cold mix of rain, sleet and snow swept the North Texas plains. Lights back toward Guymon, Oklahoma, glimmered in icy cadence with the swirling fury.

A hard cold had set in that long winter night. It was 1956, and I was a 29-year-old shivering hulk sitting astride a large pulley, dangling from a sand line attached to a gin pole off a pulling unit on an oil rig. I bent to the task checking the swab line that plunged the depths of the well gauging the flow.

There were moments of cold contemplation as the dismal night dragged on. Though a roustabout for the time, that was not my profession. Necessity had put me in the frigid darkness of the oil patch. But there was a cause.

Blotting out the miserable cries of nature, I glanced upward and whispered a question to God, "What am I doing here?" Then my mind trailed back earthward, and far below I could

faintly see the unit operator pulling at the draw works on the Waukesha.

Above the night's caterwaul, I heard the occasional strain of the engine. I knew the man at the controls was a master. He was my friend. I never had to worry when Fred touched his feet to the clutch and brakes. Smooth was the word when he took charge of the powerful unit.

Fred and I both knew the answer to the question, "What am I doing here?" As a team, we were on the job for an oil well servicing company. But more than that, we were a team for Christ. Our pastor-deacon effort had its fruition in a Free Will Baptist pioneering venture in the capital of Oklahoma's Panhandle, Guymon.

## The Dream

Divine destiny had joined us. We became acquainted in the fall of 1947 at Hitchita, Oklahoma. We did not see each other again until our reacquaintance in August of 1956 in Guymon.

Oklahoma's State Mission Board had learned of a number of Free Will Baptists from Eastern Oklahoma who lived in Guymon. The evidence indicated that they would be interested in a church being established. A mission board member and a church planter (me!) accepted an invitation to meet the interested people and make the long trip.

We chuckled when we passed the narrow reaches of the Panhandle called Slap Out. From there on in, it seemed sure enough that we were "slap out" of Oklahoma.

Representative members from seven families attended the gathering. After prayer meeting, we conducted an informal business session to elect a secretary, a treasurer and a group leader. Promises were made that if they would keep themselves together in that loosely knit organization, the mission worker (me!) would return in November to help them build a church.

At that point the burden of the work in Guymon rested squarely upon the shoulders of the Rices, the Sessions, the Keifers, the Watsons and Granny Crisp—the originals.

November seemed so distant to those struggling with the mission in Guymon. For them, it seemed that November would never arrive. However, for me as evangelist, all too soon the designated time on the schedule arrived.

## The Struggle

Now I faced a heart-probing decision. Finances would not permit me to move my family to Guymon immediately. Yet a burden had to be met. A promise had to be kept.

A struggle welled up in my heart, "Will my family be left behind?" Christ's words, ". . . leave houses, land, wife, children and all for my sake . . .," weighed heavily on my heart and soul.

When time came for the leaving, Nettie, Nora, Rhonda, Deborah and Verla were all left behind. Hundreds

of goodbyes had been spoken previously. Such is the life of an evangelist. This time the packing was not for a week, 10 days or a month. This goodbye had no return date.

Limited three months' support was pledged. No further finance was committed. In fact, at the end of three months, an emissary from Oklahoma City came bearing two messages.

One was, "You know that there will be no further support from the Office." The other, "Why did you come way out here to purchase property?" Support did end. No inquiry as to our needs followed.

Bothered by the frank announcements from afar, the young church rented a house for us to live in, set a meager salary and began to "pound" the parsonage family each Wednesday. The congregation strapped themselves to the maximum financially. No group could have shown more compassion or care.

All that the small congregation had done and was doing, though greatly appreciated, did not meet a six-in-the-family need. That's when I sought work. Around Guymon and the general area of Southwest Kansas, Oklahoma Panhandle and the Panhandle of Texas, the oil fields were booming. Prospects for a job to supplement the income would have to be found in the oil patch.

## Spirit of the Wildcatter

Never will this Tar Heel-Okie forget that first morning in the oil field located south of Guymon in Texas. Thermometers registered 10 below zero. Wind velocity was clocked at 50 miles per hour. Only a strand of barbed wire stood between the Arctic blast and the well site.

After my baptism into the oil patch with OJT (On the Job Training), crossing the state lines of Kansas, Oklahoma and Texas became routine. Twelve to 18 hours a day was considered normal. Seldom was an oil field schedule exact.

One could work all day in Texas, all night in Kansas and the following day in Oklahoma. Double shifts were not uncommon. The pay was \$1.25 an hour up to 40 hours, with time and a half for anything over 40 hours.

Work went on no matter the weather. In drought we contended

with the grit and grime driven by the wind. Extreme wet brought the muck and mire through which a bull dozer pushed the unit. During winter snow drifts, blizzards and ice were difficult obstacles.

Summer brought hot burning winds with blasting sand. One winter the temperature fell to 22 below zero. Next summer following, the heat soared to 122 above.

Wildcating is an on-your-own venture drilling in the oil field. Wildcatters have written some of the better success stories in the annals of oil field history. Without the "catters," many fields would never have been developed. Success always brought a spirit of excitement.

That same wild-cating spirit helped establish the Free Will Baptist church in Guymon. We were on our own. We were wildcatters. But with the successful organization came a true spirit of Christmas—not just a December 25th Christmas, but a continual Christmas, at least in spirit.

When the 25th of December was first celebrated in Guymon, the church honored the birth of the King whose spirit they reflected. United, my own family rejoiced in the fact of "together again."

A Wildcatter Christmas. What memories! What a Christmas! Forty years ago. It happened that way going home. ■



ABOUT THE WRITER: Dr. Wade Jernigan is a Free Will Baptist evangelist who resides in Lexington, Oklahoma. He has always been a wildcatter at heart.

Editor's note: *Contact* circulation manager Dari Keifer Goodfellow was in the fourth grade when Wade Jernigan began preaching in Guymon. She became a charter member of First Free Will Baptist Church in Guymon, Oklahoma.

# Christmas in Paradise

By Brenda Spruill

No  
snow.



No  
cold  
ears.



Much  
love.





All my memories of Christmas are warm ones—warm sun, warm sand, warm surf. Christmas in Hawaii is certainly not a “Currier and Ives” painting. We sing a special holiday song here in the islands:

*Here we know that Christmas  
will be green and bright  
The sun to shine by day  
and all the stars at night . . .*

### The Warm Memories

We enjoy teasing about our weather to those in the throes of a winter blast, yet, quite honestly, there is always a small part of us that wants to throw a snowball or feel the bite of cold as we step outside . . . well, at least for a few minutes. And then we feel so lucky we live in Hawaii.

Christmas in paradise has given our family many warm personal memories. Memories of making our own traditions because our extended family was thousands of miles away. We wait for the first shipment of Christmas trees to arrive on the Matson freighters and Santa to ride his surf board into Waikiki to let us know that Christmas celebrations have begun.

Christmas lights are everywhere. From private homes to our City Hall, Christmas cutouts and lights help those warm Christmas feelings rekindle. It is always exciting to see the nativity included in those Christmas scenes, even though most do not understand the true meaning of the Babe in the manger.

For a few days in December, Hawaii's people drive past City Hall and view thousands of lights and large plastic snowmen. However, before they turn the corner, a life-sized nativity reminds them of the true meaning of Christmas.

### The New Colors

Warm family memories are incomplete without including our church family. Christmas colors are traditionally red and green, however, in Hawaii, Christmas colors are red, yellow, black and white. Picture the typical Sunday School pageant, then in those bathrobe costumes and tinsel halos, place the faces of our

church children—Japanese, Chinese, Samoan, Korean, Filipino and Caucasian.

I remember viewing them from my director's seat and thinking, “This is the real reason He came, so that every child in every race could be saved.” The light in the Oriental and Polynesian children's eyes, as they sing about Jesus, has got to be one of the sweetest scenes of Christmas this side of Heaven.

Hawaii is known as the “melting pot of the Pacific,” so what a wonderful opportunity to share the gospel with so many races.

Our church members look forward to the annual Christmas Eve candlelight service. The true Christmas joy shines bright as everyone carries their light outside and serenades the neighbors with Christmas carols. Everyone then spends time together with Christmas treats, no one really in a hurry to go home. Rather, we choose to celebrate together with family, our church family.

### The Giving Spirit

The beauty of the islands and the people make celebrating Christmas a colorful and warm occasion. However, thoughts of Christmas in paradise could not be complete without examining the spirit of giving that is expressed by the people.

It has become a tradition that the entire church celebrate by having a birthday party for Jesus. Birthdays are celebrated in a big way here in the islands. The people of the Pacific Rim countries rejoice when their children have their first birthday and they celebrate with a **Big** party. Neighbors and family gather for a full course meal and entertainment (usually while the guest of honor sleeps).

So, a birthday party for Jesus is appreciated by all our people. The tradition is not complete until the gifts have been given. I wish it were possible to convey the expressions of joy as each family member—young and old—marches forward to place his gift in the manger of the nativity. These gifts have helped many of our missionaries to have a happier new year.

We may get homesick for our extended family during the holidays. But considering the warmth, color and

spirit of the people, it really is wonderful to celebrate Christmas in paradise.

*Mele Kalikimaka from Hawaii. ■*



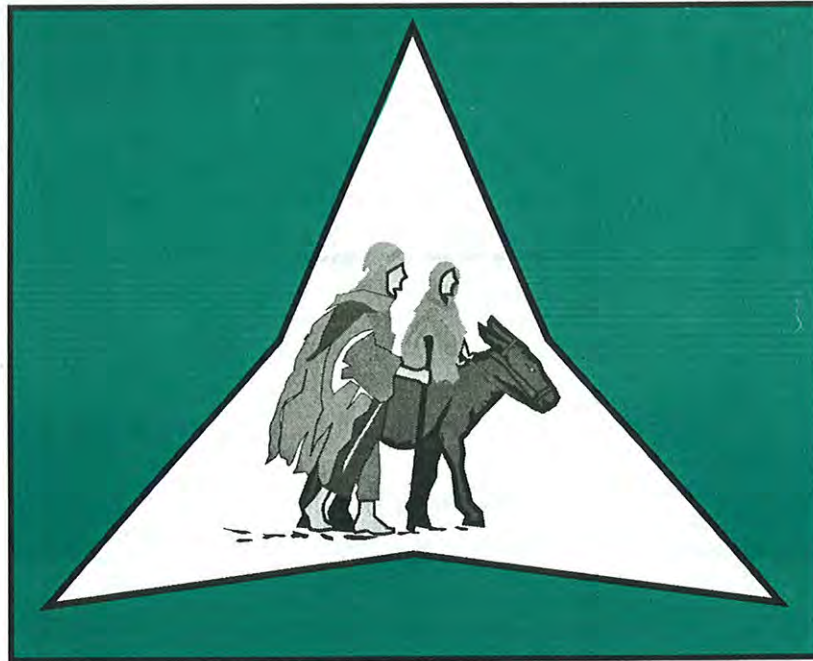
**ABOUT THE WRITER:** Mrs. Brenda Spruill teaches the Teen Sunday School Class at Waipahu Free Will Baptist Church in Waipahu, Hawaii. The mother of four also heads the English Department at Lanakila Baptist High School. Her father, Reverend Luther Sanders, founded the Waipahu Church. Brenda was a charter member.

### Capital Stewardship/Victory Campaign September 1996 Update

State	Goal	Gifts	Balance
Alabama	\$ 76,397.63	\$ 4,991.15	\$ 471,406.48
Arizona	1,228.93	2,883.71	(1,654.78)
Arkansas	76,860.94	43,062.13	33,798.81
Atlantic Canada	1,570.51	897.00	673.51
California	17,216.76	1,444.20	15,772.56
Colorado	789.18	1,165.00	(375.82)
Florida	20,703.30	6,347.42	14,355.88
Georgia	38,179.19	28,985.88	9,193.31
Hawaii	184.54	727.26	(542.72)
Idaho	353.37	25.00	328.37
Illinois	16,176.29	4,949.47	11,226.82
Indiana	7,868.27	1,846.75	6,021.52
Iowa	266.99	0.00	266.99
Kansas	1,287.82	280.00	1,007.82
Kentucky	35,454.34	5,674.29	29,780.05
Louisiana	94.23	1,925.00	(1,830.77)
Maryland	6,812.10	1,539.38	5,272.72
Michigan	15,116.19	16,004.22	(888.03)
Mississippi	15,559.86	3,843.23	11,716.63
Missouri	60,484.40	33,794.91	26,689.49
Montana	27.48	100.00	(72.52)
Nebraska	102.08	119.00	(16.92)
New Mexico	596.80	630.55	(33.75)
North Carolina	59,118.06	7,131.40	51,986.66
Northeast Association	883.41	270.00	613.41
Northwest Association	1,087.58	201.00	886.58
Ohio	40,923.66	19,588.10	21,335.56
Oklahoma	92,271.60	10,432.08	81,839.52
South Carolina	18,335.75	3,102.00	15,233.75
South Dakota		175.00	(175.00)
Tennessee	78,557.09	59,314.11	19,242.98
Texas	11,547.20	7,341.52	4,205.68
Virginia	24,323.33	2,027.93	22,295.40
Virgin Islands		200.00	(200.00)
West Virginia	46,204.51	998.00	45,206.51
Wisconsin		61.00	(61.00)
Other		2,978.85	(2,978.85)
Totals	\$766,583.39	\$275,056.54	\$491,526.85

# Christmas is Worth the Trouble

By Larry Montgomery



I occasionally hear people say that they dread Christmas. Others bemoan the rush, the expense and general aggravation that accompany the season. Some wistfully patter, "Wake me when it's over!" While I realize there is truth to these complaints, I am also sure that Christmas is a wonderful time—and definitely worth the trouble.

Let me remind you that there were some unpleasant aspects to that first Christmas, too. It must have been rather frightening for the young Mary to discover that she was "the chosen of God." How do you explain pregnancy before marriage? Tough enough now, but then?

Mary and Joseph knew the truth—but parents, friends and neighbors, the rabbi—they were surely skeptical. Probably this wasn't the first rushed-up wedding in history, but it must have cast something of a shadow over their marital bliss.

And what about the census and taxation that required the nativity couple to make an untimely trip to Bethlehem? They didn't like to pay taxes then either, and now a new tax was added—and traveling by donkey was certainly no picnic, especially when pregnant.

And then with approaching childbirth, to find every hotel filled and every door for hospitality and shelter firmly closed . . . I'm sure the prospects of staying in a stable (not to mention having a baby far from the help and support of family or midwife) was most distressing to Joseph and Mary.

But it was all worth it! In the midst of their fright, stress and trouble, God brought His Son into the world to be the Savior of us all. God turned the negative experience into a most blessed one.

Christmas is still worth it. I believe that with a little attention and effort, you can minimize the negative and

maximize the positive aspects of Christmas. Put Christ and the celebration of His birth at the heart of your Christmas; push less important (and sometimes distracting) things aside. God loves us! We have a Savior! Let's celebrate Christmas! ■



ABOUT THE WRITER: Reverend Larry Montgomery pastors Cofer's Chapel Free Will Baptist Church in Nashville, Tennessee. He serves on the Free Will Baptist Bible College Board of Trustees.

# The Vocabulary of God

By R. F. Smith, Jr.

## Logos

It's Christmas and Christmas is Emmanuel—"God with us." The writer of John's Gospel puts it this way: "The word of God became flesh and dwelt among us." But John didn't say, "word." He said, "*Logos*," a term we translate "word." There are volumes and volumes written on *Logos*.

To the Greek (for whom John was writing, reformatting the Jewish-based Christian faith into Greek-understanding), *Logos* meant the reason of God, the wisdom of God, the mind of God, the power of God.

When John says, "*Logos*," (or Word) of God became a human being, he's saying about all about God there is to say. He's really saying that the *vocabulary of God* was poured into the human being named Jesus.

The total vocabulary of God—His words, His reason, His mind, His wisdom, His power—were poured into His Son. God's entire dictionary focused in the person of the Carpenter's son. God's language was transported into Jesus.

And from the wooden manger of Bethlehem, to the wooden cross of Calvary, on to the stone tomb of Easter, Jesus says: "God loves you. And God is with you."

In more ways than one can ever count, Jesus—the complete vocabulary of God—says in personal, human terms that God cares, that God is approachable and knows what it's like to be human. He knows what it's like to hurt, to cry, to feel lonely and rejected, to be misunderstood, to be ridiculed, to be spit upon and physically attacked.

And because He knows—because He's "been there, done that"—He says, "I will be with you in whatever valley you are in. I will be with you in the middle of whatever storm is blowing upon your soul. Never again will you walk alone; I am here, now, right with you."

One of the great dangers in our faith pilgrimage is to make God so big we cannot fit into His life. But when the vocabulary of God was poured into the Baby of Bethlehem, things happened and things changed.

It was as if God were saying, as indeed He did and does: "Don't ever make Me so big you miss Me. I am big enough to operate a universe; I am small enough to fit into a manger; I am human enough to die on a cross; and I am God enough to overcome any tomb in which you lay me."

The *vocabulary of God* became person and lived among us. Indeed! And in deed. ■

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



May the  
Joy  
of  
Christmas  
be Yours  
Always.



Merry  
Christmas  
from all of  
us at  
Contact.



# Miracle at 7777 Forest Lane

By James Carrington



**M**y July plans were made to meet with 6,000 or so other Free Will Baptists in Fort Worth, Texas.

My wife and I have always received a blessing by attending our national convention. This year, as always, we hoped for side benefits of seeing friends as we traveled across country.

Thursday before departure, we placed a call to the home of my best friend from high school in McKinney, Texas, just outside Dallas. We planned to spend the weekend before the convention with Marvin and his wife, Alice, and get reacquainted after several years apart.

As Alice answered the phone and recognized my joking voice, she said, "Jimmie, you haven't heard about Marvin, have you?" She went on to inform me that my friend had suffered a serious heart attack and was in the coronary care unit at Medical City Dallas Hospital in stable, though guarded, condition. We assured her that we would immediately begin praying and have our church family put Marvin before the Lord. We also assured her we would be in contact as soon as we reached the Dallas area.

Sunday, my wife and I chose to spend the day at the hospital with our friends. Marvin, though weakened by his failing heart, was more than willing to have us visit every chance his caretakers allowed. By his bedside we held hands and once again I prayed to Almighty God, who loved and saved us, to strengthen my long-standing friend now in the valley of the shadow.

Monday, doctors told the family their diagnosis, that there was only 24% heart function with no possible repairs. At first there seemed to be a negative response to the possibility of a transplanted heart. Marvin's exposure to two bypass operations and

several balloon procedures produced an attitude of "been there, done that—why more?"

I explained that God would reveal His will when they needed to give their final answer to such a choice. Marvin seemed encouraged as we prayed. He prayed with us as well as for us and our work for the Lord. We all experienced much-needed assurance and unusual peace.

Back in Fort Worth, we revisited denominational activities and returned to our hotel room to rest after the evening services. I awoke about 3:00 a.m. with a heavy burden for the needs of my friend. After praying for him, I was impressed to go to his bedside. Driving and praying in the darkness, I made my way to the now-familiar address—7777 Forest Lane (I reflected on the numbers and felt good about it), Dallas, Texas.

When I quietly entered the ninth floor CCU area, I met a dark-haired, brown-eyed young nurse who smiled as I inquired about my friend's condition. "He's rested, and I'm sure he's awake. Would you like to see him?"

At 4:00 a.m. our talk was quiet but rewarding on how good the Lord had been to us both over our lives and would be in the future. Moved, I prayed that God would surround the place and these people with His presence.

As I left, I thanked the night nurse. As we walked into the hallway, I suppose that because of this unusual visitation hour, she was interested in our friendship. I explained that we came from Tennessee because of the National Association of Free Will Baptists meeting in nearby Fort Worth. And how what we had thought would be a joyful weekend visit with our dear friends had turned into this critical situation, and I was trying to aid and to comfort.

She said, "How amazing that fate would put you here at this time."

Quietly, I said, "There is no such thing as fate. But I am convinced that God is moving and working things around us all the time. God knew where we would be today and He is working all of this out to His glory! Are you a Christian?"

Hanging her head, she replied, "Yes, I'm a Catholic. But I don't go to church anymore."

I said, "I'm Protestant, but that's not what makes a person right with

God; it's a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ that saves a person's soul." Then, as I told her of my salvation experience and what Jesus had done in our lives, tears began to well up in her eyes.

About that time a young black lady who worked in the lab appeared. The nurse introduced me to her as "one of yours." Upon that statement, the jubilant reply was, "I have prayed that the Lord would put someone else in front of you! Praise the Lord!" Smiling, she shook my hand and went away rejoicing.

"We've been talking about this for a while," the dark-eyed nurse commented.

"Have you ever asked Jesus Christ to save you from your sins?" She shook her head. "Do you have that personal relationship with Jesus Christ?"

"No," she answered as the tears freely flowed from those brown eyes. I asked if she felt Jesus could save sinners. "Yes."

"Would you like to ask Him to save you from your sins?"

"I'm a sinner and I would!" she said.

In the quietness of a nearby coffee room, a young CCU nurse bowed her head and tearfully asked Jesus Christ to do what only He could do—save her lost soul. As we both wiped tears from our faces, I asked, "Sister, can God look down from Heaven in the middle of the night, into a little coffee room on the ninth floor of a hospital in the middle of Dallas, Texas, and hear our broken prayers and save your soul?"

"Yes, He can!"

"And He did," I responded. "And if doubt comes to call, remember, the last words of Jesus on the cross were 'It is finished!' He did not mean His pain was finished or His life was finished; He meant the payment for our sins was complete and finished! Nothing else is needed. He completed our redemption. Your faith has made you complete in Him. It is finished—salvation—a new life—a new heart."

When told of his nurse's salvation, Marvin replied, "God can bring some good out of any trouble; praise the Lord!"

Marvin's doctor concurred that only a heart transplant can sustain life. Questions of insurance, donors, blood types, body size, quality of life expectations found suitable answers. Every

answer reaffirmed that God was, and is, working around us every day.

As we left Thursday, we prayed with a more confident, more hopeful, though gravely ill, brother in Christ. Tuesday following our departure from Dallas, our prayers centered on a medical procedure called a heart transplant.

As I write this more than two months later, every step has been a celebration of success ahead of schedule. Marvin has begun driving again. In a matter of days he will be back at work and at church. We serve a God of miracles.

I know of two miracles at 7777 Forest Lane—a new (transplanted) heart to renew my friend's physical life, and a new heart (spiritual heart transplant) to give eternal life to a new sister in Christ. ■



ABOUT THE WRITER: Reverend James Carrington pastors United Free Will Baptist Church in Dickson, Tennessee. He is moderator of the Cumberland Association's Western Quarterly Meeting. He previously pastored six years in Plymouth, North Carolina.

## Directory Update

### GEORGIA

Gene McCard to Cross Roads Church, Cochran, from Warner Robbins Church, Warner Robbins  
Tim Hutchinson to First Church, Dublin

### KANSAS

Randy Mashburn to First Church, Wellington

### TEXAS

Jeffrey Conner to First Church, Carthage, from Cross Church, Iola  
Bill Bacon to First Church, Weatherford



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New gift subscriptions will start with the January 1997 issue.

Offer expires 12/31/96.

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will  
last  
all  
year!

# FREE WILL BAPTIST NEWSFRONT

## Rev. Herman Lewis, Pioneer Preacher, With the Lord

BATESVILLE, AR—The Reverend Herman Alvin Lewis, a Free Will Baptist preacher for 73 years, died September 20. He was 98 years old. Funeral services were conducted September 23 at First FWB Church in Batesville. Reverends Bobby Shepherd and J. W. Blanks officiated.

Born March 8, 1898, in Lebanon, Missouri, the eldest of seven children, Reverend Lewis lived in log cabins with dirt floors. The family moved to Arkansas in a covered wagon in 1912. Two months later, the 14-year-old lad was saved during a brush arbor meeting.

When he was 25, Brother Lewis preached his first sermon after borrowing his mother's Bible. He had no college degree, but he did have a solid ninth-grade education and 52 days in singing schools. That served him well, since Herman Lewis memorized hundreds of Bible verses and quoted them extensively during his sermons.

He was ordained as a Free Will Baptist preacher September 12, 1924, and promptly began his circuit riding ministry. During seven decades as pastor and church organizer, Lewis pastored at least 14 churches in six Arkansas counties. His first pastorate was at New



Home FWB Church in Mt. Pleasant.

Rev. Lewis sometimes pastored as many as seven churches at once, traveling to those early appointments on foot, on horseback, by wagon and later by bus, trains, cars and planes. A widely-used revivalist, he baptized many hundreds of converts in creeks, ponds, lakes, road ditches and baptistries. In time, he was elected moderator of the Arkansas State Association.

Though most of his pastorates occurred in Arkansas, Brother Lewis impacted California and Washington Free Will Baptists as well. In 1949 he organized and pastored Santa Paula FWB Church in Southern California. He then organized three other Los Angeles-area churches, organized California's West Coast Association and

served as its first moderator.

The Herman Lewis Christian Academy stands in his honor in Santa Paula, California.

Many of Reverend Lewis' descendants are active in the Lord's work including two sons who are ministers, two who are deacons, two grandsons who are deacons and two grandsons-in-law who are ministers.

One of his grandsons, Clarence Lewis of Nashville, Tennessee, eulogized Reverend Lewis citing his example as a man of prayer. "When he prayed, it was like he was actually in a conversation with God," Lewis said.

A 92-page biography was written about Herman Lewis in 1974. He wrote these words in the copy he gave to Clarence Lewis, "Observe with care of whom you speak, to whom you speak, and how and when and where you speak."

Two of his surviving five sons pastor Free Will Baptist churches—Reverend Hoover Lewis (Ballews Chapel FWB Church, Grubbs, Ark.) and Reverend Glenn Lewis (First FWB Church, Pryor, Okla.). Other survivors include two daughters, one brother, one sister, 23 grandchildren, 40 great-grandchildren and 15 great-great-grandchildren.

## Wiggs to Write *Contact* Column

ANTIOCH, TN—North Carolina pastor Dennis Wiggs will begin writing a monthly column for ministers in the January 1997 issue of *Contact*. Reverend Wiggs pastors Ruth's Chapel FWB Church in New Bern.

Brother Wiggs will re-visit the popular how-to column, "Especially for Young Preachers," a column he wrote for three years (1986-1988), supplying well-written suggestions geared for younger ministers. The one-page items have been reprinted by a number of pastors and widely used.

The timely ideas and pointers will be designed to help young ministers cope



with life behind the pulpit and in the community. However, older ministers and laymen will also find the practical column beneficial.

Reverend Wiggs (58) has been a Free Will Baptist minister 34 years. He began pastoring in 1962, conducted daily radio programs and served as principal of a Christian school.

He was elected to the Sunday School and Church Training Board in 1994.

Readers on line with E-Mail who have suggestions for Brother Wiggs can contact him at [dwiggs@juno.com](mailto:dwiggs@juno.com).

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## Southeastern College President Goes Full-Time



WENDELL, NC—After serving seven years as part-time president of Southeastern FWB College, Reverend Billy Bevan resigned as pastor of Hilltop FWB Church (Fuquay-Varina) to accept the presidential post full time with the college. The move was announced May 9 by Board of Directors chairman Dann Patrick. Bevan began full-time duties August 1.

Because of expanding responsibilities at the college, Reverend Bevan stated that he did not feel that he could continue to lead both ministries. He had pastored Hilltop FWB Church 17 years.

Bevan is the third president of the North Carolina-based school. The 48-year-old minister has pastored 27 years in Georgia, Mississippi and North Carolina.

He was one of the original founders of Southeastern College. He served on the college's Building Site Committee, Construction Committee and the Board of Directors.

Brother Bevan is a 1970 graduate of Free Will Baptist Bible College, and served two years as president of the FWBCC Alumni Association.

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## Perry Completes 27 Years on Oklahoma Board

MOORE, OK—Reverend Berton Perry, the first full-time director of Oklahoma's State Mission Board, resigned earlier this year to accept a pastoral ministry in Arkansas. Rev. Perry served 27 years on the Mission Board, 14 years as a member and 13 years as director.

The 59-year-old minister was named Mission Board director on November 1, 1983. During the next 13 years, Perry promoted mission work in 246 Oklahoma churches, served 29 months as interim pastor in five missions and spent 33 months as superintendent at construction projects for new mission works.

David Bigger, Mission Board chairman, said, "Brother Berton served as Mission Board treasurer, bookkeeper, fund raiser and office secretary. He al-



so scheduled itinerary services for foreign, home and state missionaries while directing the Oklahoma board. We thank him for his faithfulness, honesty, integrity and a job well done."

Until his resignation, Perry had invested his entire ministry in Oklahoma. He was first elected to the Mission Board in 1967. While pastoring the Murry Spur FWB Church in Spiro in 1982, he prayed through a time of restlessness and intense uneasiness. Seven months later, events were set in motion that moved him in the position as mission director.

"During the 13 years of my service under this Board," Perry said in his final written report, "I have never been scolded or reprimanded."



## 150 Attend Church Growth Conference

NASHVILLE, TN—Guests and leaders from 16 states and two foreign countries gathered at Free Will Baptist Bible College September 18-20 to hear church growth specialist Kenneth Hemphill. Dr. Hemphill, president of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, spoke six times. The former director of Center for Church Growth presented both informative and inspirational topics.

"One of the most encouraging things was the way Dr. Hemphill kept emphasizing the scriptures as God's book of church growth," said Robert Woodard, Bible professor at FWBCC.

Dean of students Terry Forrest evaluated the conference, "In my opinion, this was the best conference including Bible Conference, that's been held on our campus in the last several years."

A two-hour forum Thursday afternoon featured a question and answer format focusing on the problems and procedures of church growth.

Friday morning executive secretary Melvin Wor-

thington moderated an informal summit to climax the conference. One hundred pastors and other denominational leaders attended the session designed to probe church growth issues among Free Will Baptists.

Dr. Robert Woodard observed, "The summit represented a 'genesis,' a starting point. It was an honest effort to begin to do something about the lack of significant growth within our denomination."

A number of suggestions emerged concerning the role of Free Will Baptist national agencies in promoting growth. They included providing better resources for churches, publishing articles on growing churches, promoting regional growth rallies, providing better marketing techniques in the areas of television and radio, and more.

FWBCC president Tom Malone issued a challenge to "go forth, determined and committed, to fulfill the Great Commission, by building some really great churches for the Lord."

## Local Church Honors Molly Barker

DAVIS, NC—Members of Davis FWB Church designated August 25 as "Molly Barker Day" to honor the veteran Free Will Baptist missionary to Uruguay, South America. The surprise special day focused on Molly Barker's life and work.

After Sister Barker described her work in South America through creative stories and a slide presentation during the morning worship service, Pastor

Tim Osborne presented her with a celebration plate and a video recording about her life.

Dr. Mary Wisheart, executive secretary of Women Nationally Active for Christ, participated in the event and also paid tribute to her long-time friend, Molly Barker.

The church also sent \$1,583 to Barker's missionary account. The funds were raised through Vacation Bible School and a special offering.



Molly Barker (center) holds celebration plate. Others pictured: Sarah Fulcher (L), Sherrie Davis, Linda Willis, Pastor Tim Osborne, Sylvia Fulcher, Barbara Styron.

**Pray**  
for the  
**1996**  
**Leadership**  
**Conference**

**December 2-3**  
**Regal Maxwell Houe Hotel**  
**Nashville, Tennessee**

## Church Homecoming Honors Harold Pitts

CANTON, NC—Homecoming services at Canton FWB Church took an unusual turn in 1996 when the August 25 day of celebration was dedicated to the memory of Reverend Harold Pitts. He is the only minister to pastor the church twice in its 59-year history. Reverend Pitts pastored there 1952-1962 and 1968-1972. He died December 31, 1995, at age 81.

In keeping with the dedication theme, the homecoming message was preached by Rev. John Reed, pastor of Sulphur Springs FWB Church in Northport, Alabama. Reed is married to Ann Pitts, daughter of Harold Pitts.

Special music at the homecoming was provided

by Todd Shelton who married Brother Pitts' granddaughter, Kim Reed. Shelton serves as minister of music and youth at Victory FWB Church in Goldsboro, North Carolina.

The Canton Church began in a three-week tent revival 59 years ago. After meeting in several older buildings, the congregation built its first sanctuary in 1937. The current sanctuary was built in 1957, a five-bedroom parsonage in 1968 and a fellowship building in 1978.

Reverend Reuben Cason currently pastors Canton FWB Church.

## West Virginia Men Make History

RIPLEY, WV—The first-ever West Virginia Men's Conference registered 74 ministers and laymen for the October 3-5 inaugural session. The three-day event met at Cedar Lakes Conference Center.

Conference coordinators Russell Wright and Ivan Ryan presided at five plenary sessions which included congregational singing, special music and preach-



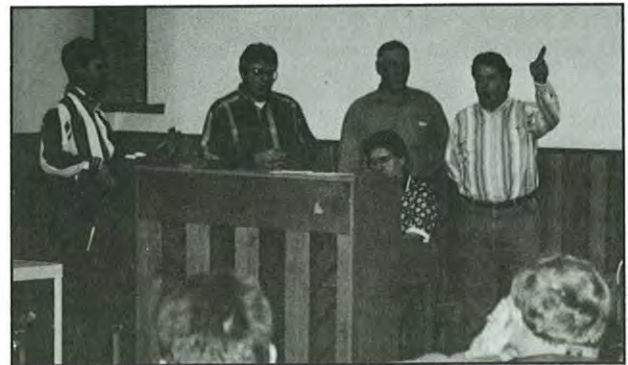
Four men with Bibles take the preaching seriously.

ing. Reverend Wright, who pastors Heritage FWB Church in Inwood also serves as assistant moderator to the state association. Reverend Ryan pastors Central FWB Church in Huntington and serves on the state Mission Board.

"The purpose of the conference was an effort to bring more unity among our men across the state," Reverend Wright said. "This is not a business meeting, but rather a fellowship time."

Reverend Ryan added, "This has given our men the opportunity to come together and get to know one another better. We've worked for a year to make this conference possible."

Master's Men director James Vallance addressed the men Friday afternoon on total lay involvement. *Contact* editor Jack



A scrap-iron quartet sings the good news.

Williams preached five times on Elijah the prophet.

Free-time schedule included lake fishing, basketball, horseshoes, rifle range, canoes and other activities including observing the deer, geese and ducks sharing the conference grounds with them.

The group plans to conduct a 1997 conference, probably in October at Cedar Lakes Conference Center.



Men brave 35° weather during outside service.

Pastor **Randy Mashburn** reports an attendance increase from 11 to 25 at the mission church in **Wellington, KS (First FWB Church)**. The church also had one conversion and three rededications.

We goofed again. Right church, wrong pastor. For the record, **Shawn Bassham** pastors **First FWB Church in Drumright, OK**. We are happy to correct the earlier mistake printed in the September 1996 issue.

While **Illinois** pastor **Sam Williams** was out of town attending the national convention in Fort Worth, some enterprising members removed the walls in his office. Not to worry. They put up new walls and Pastor Williams now has four times the space at **Immanuel FWB Church in Joliet, Oh**, those same guys also put a new roof on the parsonage. Sometimes it pays a fellow to get out of town.

VBS activities at **Freedom FWB Church in Marion, IL**, resulted in 13 conversions among 75 attendees. **Kenneth Edwards** pastors.

The first recipient for the \$1,000 William Mishler Missions Scholarship is **Elizabeth Rasar** from **Decatur, IL**. The scholarship will be awarded annually by the Illinois Board of Missions to an Illinois student at Free Will Baptist Bible College.

Pastor **Michael Waddell** reports record attendance of 171 at **Soul's Harbor FWB Church in Pensacola, FL**, during homecoming activities in September. Two people were converted that day.

Thanks to new convert **Kip Pickler**, members of **North Memphis FWB Church in Memphis, TN**, have a versatile sound system donated to the church. **Dale Campbell** gave a ceiling fan for the fellowship hall. **David Burgess** pastors.

Members at **Wyandotte FWB Church in Mansfield, OH**, remodeled their fellowship hall and added three new Sunday School rooms. Pastor **Brian Phillips** baptized five converts.

VBS at **Old Kyger FWB Church in Cheshire, OH**, resulted in 11 conversions and baptisms in five days. **Robert Thompson** pastors.

Pastor **Bert Miller** reports 13 conversions at **Lockbourne FWB Church in Lockbourne, OH**.

**Country Chapel FWB Church in Cardington, OH**, reports five new members and five baptisms. The church installed new windows and plans more improvements, according to Pastor **Daniel Bates**.

Let's hear it for **Damascus FWB Church in Marianna, FL**. Members paid off a 180-month mortgage in just 81 months. They now plan to build an educational facility. **Allan Austin** pastors.

There's a new mission work underway in **Battle Creek, MI**. Mission pastor **Robert Trimble** secured a meeting room to seat 200 people in a Holiday Inn Express just off I-94. The new work was officially approved October 6 by the state Mission Board. Call Brother Trimble at 616/968-3072 if you have friends or relatives in the Battle Creek area.

Members of **Newark FWB Church in Newark, OH**, dedicated their multi-purpose building on August 18 with Ohio executive secretary **Edwin Hayes** speaking. The structure houses Sunday School rooms, gymnasium, kitchen and two offices. **Robert Bryant** pastors.

Pastor **Roy Bennett** reports five conversions and four baptisms at **Antioch FWB Church in Wheelersburg, OH**. The church just completed a 13-week new converts class.

**Fourth FWB Church in St. Louis, MO**, organized June 13 and called **John Rhodes** as pastor. The church labored almost nine years as a mission effort. Fifty-five charter members stood with Pastor Rhodes.

Pastor **Bob Thebeau** celebrated 25 years at **First FWB Church in Desoto, MO**, in 1996.

Congratulations to members of **Leadington FWB Church in Leadington, MO**, for celebrating their 75th an-

niversary. The church organized in 1921 with 13 charter members. Former pastor **Frank Giunta** preached the anniversary sermon August 25. **Vernon Long** now pastors the church; he is the 24th pastor.

Pastor **Keith Lloyd** needed a place to live, and thanks to the volunteer work of members at **Zion Hill FWB Church in Millwood, GA**, he has it. The new parsonage was completed early this summer.

**Calvary FWB Church in Fayetteville, NC**, organized May 9. Pastor **Randy Stone** has led the church to self-supporting status.

**Southeastern FWB College in Wendell, NC**, began construction this fall on a \$900,000 activities center. College officials expect the 21,000-square-foot building to be completed by August 1997. The facility will house additional administrative, academic and athletic programs.

Lightning struck **Pioneer FWB Church in Stigler, OK**, destroying the church and leaving the congregation with no place to worship. They plan to rebuild as soon as possible.

Pastor **Jerry Copeland** is enjoying the new parsonage at **Way of the Cross FWB Church in Sallisaw, OK**.

Reverend **Henry L. Scroggins** (78), a Free Will Baptist minister for 46 years, died March 30. Brother Scroggins served California and Oklahoma churches. His final pastorate was at **Heavener FWB Church in Heavener, OK**, where he served from 1989 until February 28, 1996, just 30 days before his death.

Ground breaking for a \$300,000 building was conducted August 24 by members of **Westfield FWB Church in Katy, TX**. Missionary pastor **David Ferguson** said the 130-seat brick auditorium will be attached to at least five classrooms, office space and nursery. ■

# Coming Next Month

↪ Right from the  
Start

↪ Can we Change?

↪ Where are the  
Pastors?

↪ Let's Plan

↪ Solo Flight

↪ A Killer Named  
Fran

# THE TOGETHER WAY

September 1996

## Receipts:

State	Design.	CO-OP	Total	September '95	Year To Date
Alabama	\$ 972.43	\$ .00	\$ 972.43	\$ 827.48	\$ 5,263.81
Arizona	959.94	143.20	1,103.14	.00	4,704.80
Arkansas	13,369.37	11,246.64	24,616.01	31,593.08	227,078.14
California	.00	937.81	937.81	1,031.12	9,200.52
Colorado	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
Delaware	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
Florida	85.00	6,298.11	6,383.11	3,530.37	27,159.99
Georgia	7,947.74	1,805.85	9,753.59	12,414.94	144,285.16
Hawaii	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
Idaho	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
Illinois	5,835.64	1,681.77	7,517.41	8,823.93	96,783.33
Indiana	591.23	75.71	666.94	1,324.26	7,924.37
Iowa	.00	.00	.00	40.00	360.00
Kansas	.00	.00	.00	.00	353.15
Kentucky	298.00	.00	298.00	495.74	6,722.16
Louisiana	10.00	.00	10.00	.00	100.00
Maryland	.00	225.00	225.00	877.59	2,534.47
Michigan	25,635.93	6,722.56	32,358.49	27,833.90	151,406.93
Mississippi	214.50	265.62	480.12	411.12	4,324.09
Missouri	9,846.73	.00	9,846.73	11,473.16	104,998.30
Montana	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
Nebraska	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
New Jersey	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
New Mexico	.00	.00	.00	283.14	5,933.10
North Carolina	630.80	1,232.70	1,863.50	1,172.61	16,611.04
Ohio	4,662.46	1,982.82	6,645.28	321.87	93,497.07
Oklahoma	49,310.38	.00	49,310.38	49,760.60	485,192.17
South Carolina	20,144.36	158.79	20,303.15	26,363.53	186,575.52
South Dakota	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
Tennessee	2,737.57	1,620.24	4,357.81	5,616.49	89,941.57
Texas	9,513.08	532.53	10,045.61	.00	65,741.66
Virginia	44.58	.00	44.58	2,533.32	11,458.97
Virgin Islands	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
West Virginia	4,315.02	118.44	4,433.46	7,637.74	50,258.12
Wisconsin	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
Canada	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
Northwest Association	.00	.00	.00	.00	41.93
Northeast Association	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
Other	.00	.02	.02	.04	.53
Totals	\$157,124.76	\$35,047.81	\$192,172.57	\$194,366.03	\$1,798,450.90

## Disbursements:

Executive Office	\$ 8,689.13	\$19,276.28	\$ 27,965.41	\$ 29,984.21	\$ 240,797.04
Foreign Missions	81,096.50	3,627.44	84,723.94	85,291.44	869,505.46
FWBBC	9,979.31	3,627.44	13,606.75	19,482.19	141,237.77
Home Missions	48,071.59	2,838.88	50,910.47	45,948.36	437,226.99
Retirement & Insurance	778.19	2,208.01	2,986.20	2,636.24	25,516.44
Master's Men	1,535.51	2,208.01	3,743.52	4,094.34	31,664.05
Commission for Theo. Integrity	93.22	78.86	172.08	183.26	1,572.97
FWB Foundation	729.24	946.31	1,675.55	1,606.49	14,687.73
Historical Commission	90.12	78.86	168.98	172.80	1,431.18
Music Commission	84.37	78.86	163.23	146.00	1,376.41
Radio & TV Commission	81.28	78.86	160.14	156.44	1,669.49
Hillsdale FWB College	1,082.59	.00	1,082.59	1,267.65	12,048.33
Other	4,813.71	.00	4,813.71	3,396.61	19,717.04
Totals	\$157,124.76	\$35,047.81	\$192,172.57	\$194,366.03	\$1,798,450.90

## FOREIGN MISSIONS



## Mrs. Uechi's Baptismal Testimony

Translated by Fred Hersey



Missionary Fred Hersey (right) is shown next to Mrs. Fusa Uechi who was baptized in August at Bihoro, Japan. Her two daughters stand with her.

I first came in contact with Jesus about 38 years ago. At that time there was a car with a loud speaker advertising and inviting people to attend an evangelistic meeting in a tent that had been put up on an empty lot. So that night I went to the evangelistic meeting. At first I didn't understand anything the speaker was talking about but I attended every night for seven services. I believe that God was trying to talk to me.

The third night, I told myself that I didn't understand but the evangelist said that he felt that in the crowd there was one person who was very earnestly seeking salvation. Suddenly a strange feeling came over me. I felt that I should earnestly pray to God. At that time, because of the conditions in my home, I was not able to attend regular church services.

After that, about 35 years passed. Then about three years ago, in the first part of August I became seriously ill and had to be taken to a hospital in Abashiri. I received medical treatment but was in much pain all over my body. I spent each day just staring at the sky. At the end of August they re-

leased me from the hospital but I was not much better.

During this time I received an invitation from Mrs. Sawada, a Christian of the Bihoro church, to attend an evangelistic meeting to hear a Japanese evangelist, Preacher Matsuyama. I attended the meeting but was not able to stay until the close of the service. As I was leaving the building to return home I suddenly felt a strange peace come over me. I thought God had given me this feeling. I soon realized that I didn't believe in Jesus as my Savior.

In attending church every week I found out that I was a sinner. I came to believe that Jesus died on the cross for my sins and accepted Him as my Savior. I also thought about being baptized.

Again, my health broke down and in one year I was in and out of the hospital five or six times. This continued for a few years and I thought God must think it's not yet time for me to be baptized.

In January of this year, I had another serious operation and I prayed and asked the Holy Spirit to please help me. One time a nurse came and asked, "Mrs. Uechi, who are you trying to call or talk to?" I told her because I believe in Jesus, I was praying to God to watch over me and keep me safe.

Every day when I wake up I ask God to help me and give me the strength I need.

Today I'm very thankful to be able to follow my Lord in baptism. ■

Note from Fred Hersey: Mrs. Fusa Uechi was baptized at the Bihoro Church in northern Japan on August 25, 1996. Her daughter, who is also a Christian and member of the Bihoro Church, had tears of joy as she watched her mother baptized. Mrs. Uechi is close to 80 years of age.

Fred Hersey is a veteran missionary working in northern Japan.



## WOMEN NATIONALLY ACTIVE FOR CHRIST

### *Woman's Window on the World*

By Mary R. Wisheart

#### *From My Window*

Gifts! What is the most valuable gift you ever received? What is the most valuable gift you ever gave?

Probably we all think of the money involved when we first hear these questions. Some gifts, however, have nothing to do with money and yet are the most precious, valuable and costly gifts we can give.

Think about it this Christmas. What can you give that is more precious than money?

How about time? Give a gift of time to a relative or friend in the nursing home or who lives alone. Decide deliberately to give the gift. It is precious and it will cost you something to give it. What about your own family? Can you give them the gift of time?

Do you have the gift of listening? Then give it away. A child in your corner may simply need someone to listen. You could cheer a total stranger in the nursing home immensely if you are willing to listen to her. Even your own children, husband or wife may need a listening ear, and you may have forgotten to really listen to what they are saying to you.

The warmth of a touch. Experts tell us that we human beings benefit from a warm touch. A touch may calm a person overwhelmed by emotion. A touch may lift the spirit of one who is depressed. I remember Trula Cronk saying, "Love is a warm hand over an aching ear."

Friendship. What a blessing it is to have a friend. Find someone who looks lonely, who is often alone, who doesn't seem to fit in the clique. Offer friendship. They may reject your first overtures, but keep being a friend. Friendship costs time, energy, patience and endurance, but what would we do without a friend? A blessed and heartwarming gift that demands no money.

Of course there is the gift of love. It costs dearly. Loving means giving time, a listening ear, a warm touch, willing service, whatever it takes. In Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*, a suitor must choose the right casket to win the rich and beautiful Portia. After two wrong choices the audience knows that the lead casket is the right one. The sign on it says, "Who opens this must give and hazard all he

has." When the casket is opened (by just the right suitor of course), it contains Portia's portrait. Love demands all we have? It demands our very selves, doesn't it. What a precious and costly gift. Yet all of us can give it.

Remembering the love that gave the baby Jesus, let us give the more precious and costly gifts. Gifts beyond the reach of gold, silver, precious stones or any other earthly possessions. Time, a listening ear, friendship and love.

#### *January Is Enlistment Month for WNAC*

The beginning of a new year is a good time to begin a women's group in your church if one is not presently active.

Why a women's group? Women are going to be doing something. Why not help them band together to serve the Lord in their families, church, community and around the world.

WNAC's purpose is "To provide opportunities for women to understand and fulfill the Great Commission through their responsibilities in the family, in the church, in the community and around the world." The local women's group is defined as a service organization of the church.

Through the years women have served in a variety of places, helping sustain and enlarge the work of the church.

Kits are available to new groups, including one of the new manuals, free materials and enough sample copies of the magazine to share with each prospective member.

Get in touch with the field worker in your area or write directly to WNAC, P. O. Box 5002, Antioch, Tennessee 37011-5002.

#### *Enlistment Materials Available*

The January/February issue of *Co-Laborer* magazine includes an enlistment program for established women's groups.

Other enlistment materials are available from the WNAC office.

If January is an inconvenient time for enlistment, then select another month. Sometime during the year make a special effort to enlist new members. All through the year seek to get more women into your groups. ■



## BOARD OF RETIREMENT

## December and the Preacher

By William Evans

Celebrating a birthday and Christmas in the same month produced some interesting experiences during my 20-plus years as pastor. During that time I received many generous, thoughtful and even some humorous gifts.

Once I received a power saw and a Work-mate for my shop. Other times, a suit or shirt and tie or that wonderful, fits-all gift . . . cash.

One birthday I received almost 40 pairs of socks . . . all opened one pair at a time. Included were dress socks, sports socks and work socks. Some were regular length and others over-the-calf. There were black, blue, brown, white, various other colors and one red and white striped pair. A fuchsia pair had been monogrammed by a seamstress with a good sense of humor but a poor hand for sewing.

The folks wondered how long I could show real gratitude and surprise while opening so many socks. We had lots of laughs but I didn't buy socks for months (my wife wore one pair, the red and white one, as winter house slippers for several years).

Two lessons came out of those gifts—we served generous people, and they wanted to make a meaningful gift. Both lessons were taught well.

I still have the Work-mate and the saw but the clothes, money and (alas) even the socks are gone. These gifts met immediate needs and were a real blessing.

### *So, what does this have to do with you?*

If you wonder what you and your church could do for your pastor this Christmas, consider a suit, shirt and tie, casual attire or even . . . socks. How about a nice meal out for the pastor and his wife, a short trip, some books or anything else you would be happy to receive as a gift. But if you are looking for something different, I suggest that you enroll him in the Free Will Baptist Retirement plan, or make a lump sum addition to his present account.

Why would a retirement provision be a good Christmas gift?

First, because every pastor needs help planning for the future. Some of our churches can not pay a generous wage, therefore the pastor may have no extra funds to set aside for future

needs. Other pastors may fail to consider the reality of facing retirement.

Second, one dollar invested today at our historic rate of earnings (8.59%) will grow to \$47.07 at retirement (illustration based on pastor at age 22 who retires at age 67). Waiting 10 years means that first dollar would only grow to \$20. Starting *today* is important.

Third, every six months your pastor will receive a financial report, reminding him of your generous and thoughtful gift.

Fourth, if death or disability were to strike him during his working years, you would have made some provision for him and/or his family.

Fifth, if by God's blessings your pastor reaches retirement, he will again be reminded that your church was looking ahead for him.

### *How do we go about doing it?*

Now, you may be asking, "How can we set up an account for our pastor?" Here are specific steps you can take:

1. If you want *to surprise him*, send your gift to the Board of Retirement with the following information: pastor's full name and address and the name of the church or donor. We will write him a nice letter acknowledging your Christmas gift and complete the necessary papers.
2. If you want *to personally deliver the news* of your gift, write or call the Retirement Board for an enrollment packet. Then fill out the necessary registration forms with the pastor and send them with your gift.

This is a gift the entire church can participate in now and in the future. It can also be used by an individual member.

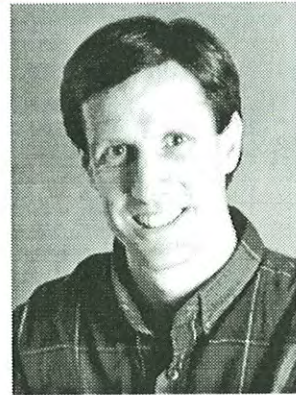
Oh, you may want to give your pastor some immediate token of your love and appreciation too. You could put the information about this gift in a pair of fuchsia socks! That would be great. ■

# YOUTH UPDATE

## COMING EVENTS

### NATIONAL YOUTH WORKERS RETREAT

SPRING '97



Barry St. Clair

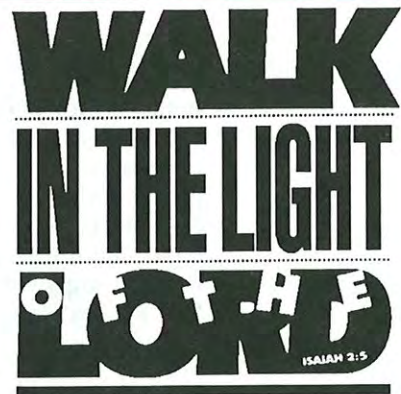
Join other youth workers February 14-16 in Branson, MO or February 28-March 2 in Monteagle, TN. Our special trainer will be Barry St. Clair, a noted author and youthworker speaker.

### SUMMER '97

Truth & Peace Youth Leadership Conference

July 7-23, 1997

If you're a high school sophomore, junior or senior, and are interested in some serious Christian leadership training, then plan on spending SUMMER '97 here. You'll find life changing events designed to help you walk in the light of the Lord.



For more information about the National Youth Workers Retreats or Truth & Peace, please call 1-800-877-7030 or write to: Youth Ministries Division • P.O. Box 17306 • Nashville, TN • 37217.





Robert E. Picirilli

## The Tenth Commandment

**T**hou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's. (Exodus 20:17; cf. Deuteronomy 5:21)

My guess is that most of us define this too simply: wanting what belongs to someone else, we say. And of course that's a short and straightforward way of putting it. Webster says about the same thing: "inordinate desire, esp. for something belonging to another." Nothing wrong with that, probably, except that it isn't broad enough or deep enough.

But the standard definition just doesn't have enough Bible in it. Covetousness gets mentioned over and over there, and almost always in a bad light. If you study what the Bible has to say about it, I think you'll agree that covetousness is an "inordinate desire," for what you don't have, whether that desire is personalized against someone else or not.

Why "inordinate"? Well, anything inordinate is out of order, not in proper perspective, looming too large in one's vision, lacking appropriate restraint or moderation. In other words, then, covetousness is any desire that gets out of proper control.

Perhaps it is directed at someone else who has what you want, so much that you envy, even hate, that person. Or perhaps it's a desire for things you don't have—whether anyone else has them or not isn't the point—and that desire tends to dominate your life.

Worse, it eats away at you and makes you dissatisfied with your lot in life, even bitter. Or maybe it's a desire that is never satisfied regardless how much one accumulates.

We see, then, that "covetousness" tends to go with words like jealousy, greed, bitterness. Indeed, in the Bible,

covetousness is closely linked with *lust* (Romans 7:7), *theft* (Micah 2:2; Joshua 7:21), *laziness* and *selfishness* (Proverbs 21:25-26), *hypocrisy* (Ezekiel 33:31), *lying* (II Peter 2:3), *idolatry* (Colossians 3:5; Ephesians 5:5), *divided loyalty* (serving two masters: Luke 16:13-14), *murder*, *oppression* and *violence* (Jeremiah 22:17), and even *straying from the faith* (I Timothy 6:11).

Covetousness doesn't keep good company! Only the evil man "blesses" the covetous person (Psalm 10:3). This sin can lead, and usually does, to all sorts of other sins. Don't forget where it took David.

Why is covetousness such a sin? Isn't it just a harmless indulgence in the heart, hidden from others?

For one thing, it's bad because of what it does to you. Covetousness robs you of contentment, makes you focus on the wrong things, embitters your life. I Timothy 6:6-11 gives a graphic description of what covetousness does to a person. Jesus shows (Luke 12:15) the covetous person misunderstands the very meaning of life.

For another thing, it's bad because it poisons your relationships with oth-

ers. The Bible tells us to love others as ourselves, to seek the well-being and joy of others in preference to our own, even to be generous and giving. A covetous person just can't do that.

Worse still, covetousness gets a person wrong with God. What you see clearly in Hebrews 13:5-6, for example, is that covetousness is ultimately a lack of trust in—worse yet, a dissatisfaction with—the provision of God.

Covetousness is the opposite of contentment, and contentment is always contentment with what God has provided us and trust in His assurance that He is always with us and provides for our needs.

You remember the Greek physician Hippocrates, whose physician's oath doctors still take? Another thing he said, writing to a herbalist doctor Cratena, was: "If it is possible, among other herbs [in the patients, he meant], cut up that weed covetousness by the roots that there be none left; for know this of a certainty, that by so doing your patients will soon be cured in mind and body."

Even the heathen recognize its destructive effects! ■

What  
are you giving  
the Lord  
for His  
Birthday?

# Luke, in *The NIV Application Commentary*

By Darrell L. Bock

Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996, 640 pp., hardback, \$24.99.



Thomas Marberry

**D**arrell Bock, professor of New Testament studies at Dallas Theological Seminary, is widely recognized as one of the leading students of Luke's Gospel. This marks his third major commentary on this Gospel.

This set of commentaries is somewhat unique in that it focuses on contemporary application of biblical teachings rather than historical exegesis. The authors and editors recognize, quite correctly, that the biblical books were written in a world quite different from our own.

While the basic elements of human nature do not change, society and culture do change. People today share many ideas and assumptions which are quite different from those found in biblical times.

In order to preach and teach effectively today, the church must answer three important questions. First, what did a biblical passage mean in the culture where it was written?

Second, how can we bridge the gap between that ancient culture and our modern culture?

Third, how can we properly apply

the teachings of that biblical passage to our world today? In his analysis of Luke, Bock seeks to answer these three questions.

Perhaps the author's approach can be best illustrated by selecting one passage and summarizing his treatment of it. He treats Luke 15:11-32, the parable of the Prodigal Son, as a unit of the gospel material.

He begins his analysis by writing, "This third parable in Luke 15 is by far the most detailed. It is unique to Luke and highlights God's willingness to receive sinners." The author notes that the father is the key character in the story; he also analyzes how each character contributes to the overall story.

After summarizing the original meaning of the parable, Bock discusses how we can bridge the gap between the world in which this parable was spoken and the modern world. He locates key theological ideas in the parable which transcend time and circumstances.

He notes that "this parable is pre-eminently about God the Father, revealing his character as compassion-

ate and forgiving." He also notes that "... the attitude of the prodigal on returning home is a snapshot of the essence of repentance."

The final section of Bock's treatment addresses how we can apply the teachings of the parable to our situation today. He emphasizes that in the parable God receives the repentant younger brother as a son. He is fully restored to the family; he is not placed on probation.

How, the author asks, do we as Christians today receive one who returns to the faith after wandering into sin?

This commentary represents a much-needed approach to the biblical books. Each book was written in a specific context, and it must be interpreted against the background of that context. When we move to a different context, we must be sure that we are properly interpreting and applying the biblical message.

While I do not agree with the author's opinion at every point, his commentary can help us apply scriptural teachings more accurately and effectively. ■

## BEYOND BELIEF



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### January - December 1996

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

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Mrs. Uechi's Baptismal Testimony, Mrs. Fusa Uechi, translated by Fred Hersey	December, 21

### Free Will Baptist Bible College

The Broader Scope of Education, Tim Campbell	January, 26
Summer Camp: Memories and Challenges, Bert Tippett	March, 27
Students see missions up close and personal, Clint Morgan	May, 27
The Virtue of Loyalty, Tim Campbell	July, 23
Training Preachers: Our Top Priority, Robert E. Woodard	September, 26
Carpe Diem For Our Teens! Brad Sneed	November, 28

### Free Will Baptist Foundation

Frank Giunta Joins Foundation Staff, William Evans	January, 27
Are You Legally Prepared for Death? William W. Evans	March, 25
Foundation Offers College Gift Annuities, David Brown	May, 28
They Carry the Purse, Frank Giunta	July, 24
Creating a Cash Flow, Frank Giunta	September, 27
Check it Out, William W. Evans	November, 25

### Home Missions

The Other Side of Church Planting, Ida Lewis	January, 28
Mexican Bible Institute to Relocate, Trymon Messer	March, 26
Missionaries Are Making a Difference, Trymon Messer	May, 26
Missionary Training Produces Good Results, Trymon Messer	July, 25
Look At Who Has Moved In! Trymon Messer	September, 28
The Benjamin Randall Day Offering	November, 26

### Randall House Publications

Don't Short-Change the Church! Alton Loveless	November, 27
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### Retirement and Insurance

Social Security, D. Ray Lewis	February, 25
How Are We Doing? William Evans	April, 26
Keeping the Golden Years Golden, Rita Mayer	June, 25
Meet Our Staff, Ray Lewis	August, 26
How Long Will Your Retirement Money Last? David Brown	October, 26
December and the Preacher, William Evans	December, 23

### Women Nationally Active for Christ

Woman's Window on the World, Mary R. Wisehart	February, 27
Woman's Window on the World, Mary R. Wisehart	April, 25
Woman's Window on the World, Mary R. Wisehart	June, 24
Woman's Window on the World, Mary R. Wisehart	October, 28
Woman's Window on the World, Mary R. Wisehart	December, 22

# Newsfront

## Churches

<b>Arizona</b>	
North Valley FWB Church, Phoenix	May, 21
<b>Arkansas</b>	
Westside FWB Church, Springdale	April, 20
<b>Florida</b>	
First FWB Church, Winter Haven	November, 21
<b>Illinois</b>	
Bethel FWB Church, South Roxana	November, 20
Pittsburgh FWB Church, Pittsburgh	August, 22
<b>Missouri</b>	
First FWB Church, Farmington	May, 22
<b>North Carolina</b>	
Canton FWB Church, Canton	December, 18
Davis FWB Church, Davis	December, 17
First FWB Church, Gastonia	August, 24
<b>Ohio</b>	
Urbana FWB Church, Urbana	February, 21

## Ministers

Barger, Owen	November, 21
Baxley, Gerald	January, 22
Floyd, Winford	February, 21
Hearron, Clarence J.	May, 22
Horton, Lester	August, 23
Lewis, Herman	December, 15
Long, Dean	March, 20
Maggard, Oral	May, 22
Mishler, William	January, 21
Osborne, Ralph	August, 24
Perry, Berton	December, 16
Pitts, Harold	March, 20
Scott, Ben	March, 19
Scudder, J. Leroy	October, 22
Shiple, H. D.	April, 22
Turner, Benny	August, 24
Varney, Lincoln	July, 18
Walker, Ken	January, 21
Winchester, Herbert	August, 24

## States

Alabama	February, 19
Arizona	June, 21
Arkansas	October, 21
California	April, 21; September, 23
Florida	August, 23
Georgia	February, 20
Idaho	September, 23
Illinois	June, 21
Kansas	September, 22
Kentucky	September, 22
Louisiana	April, 21
Maryland	September, 23
Michigan	August, 23

Mississippi	February, 18	South Carolina	May, 21
New Mexico	July, 18	Tennessee	February, 19
North Carolina	September, 21	Texas	September, 23
Ohio	October, 24	Virginia	September, 22
Oklahoma	January, 22; June, 22; December, 18	West Virginia	September, 22; December, 18

## National Ministries

Bible College Completes Land Drive	June, 22
Bible College Students Elect Leaders	July, 19
Bible College Enrolls 372 for 1995-96	April, 20
College Announces Conference Speakers	February, 20
Commission Sets Fall Theology Seminar	March, 21
Crowe Joins Home Missions Staff	April, 19
Discount Air Fares to Convention Available	April, 22; May, 23; June, 22
Faculty Positions Available at FWBCC	June, 22
500 Attend WNAC Retreat	November, 23
45 In Bible College Graduating Class of 1996	July, 20
Free Will Baptist Bible College Enrolls 340	November, 22
Free Will Baptist Bible College Adds New Faculty	October, 23
Free Will Baptist International Fellowship Organizes	January, 20
Free Will Baptist Leaders Talk 17 Hours	February, 16
FWB Foundation Delivers Endowment Gifts	April, 22
FWBCC Airs Radio Program	April, 19
FWBCC Students Buy Acre	July, 18
FWBCC To Sponsor Church Growth Conference	September, 21
Hampton Scholarship Established at FWBCC	March, 22
Historical Collection Seeks Minutes	June, 21
Instrumental Ensemble to Perform at Convention	March, 21; April, 21
Leadership Conference Set for December	November, 21
Master's Men Sets Conference	April, 20
1996 State Association Meetings	February, 22
Ohio Steering Committee Meets	October, 24
150 Attend Church Growth Conference	December, 17
Pre-Registrants to Receive Travel Guide/Map	May, 23
Wiggs to Write <i>Contact</i> Column	December, 16
Williams Named Top Meeting Planner	March, 22
WNAC Western Retreat Draws 300	January, 23

## Other

Canada Elects New Moderator	October, 21
CCC Enrollment Up 40%	November, 22
Children's Home Launches \$1 Million Campaign	July, 19
Foothills Association to Build Church in India	May, 23
FWB Family Ministries Celebrates Homecoming	January, 22
Group Sets Preaching Conference	May, 24
Harvest Ministries Purchases Property	January, 23
Hillsdale College Enrolls 120 Students	November, 22
Kelly Braisher Missions Scholarship Established	May, 23
Mexican National Association Meets in Reynosa	October, 22
Picirilli Named AABC President	February, 19
Southeastern College President Goes Full-Time	December, 16
Southeastern Enrollment Jumps 20%	November, 22
Southeastern Names Commencement Speaker	March, 21
Southeastern Sets Fall Revival	July, 19
Southeastern Sets Spring Conference	January, 24
Tornado Hits Arkansas Churches	July, 17

## Hambones and Limb Loppers



Jack Williams

**B**et you didn't know that a Sears limb lopper and a large blue trash can are essential equipment in preparing Christmas dinner. That's because you're not as resourceful as I am. I've learned to improvise, to make do and to get it done. Here's how this holiday event came down.

Last year on Christmas Eve, my son and his family drove up from Red Bay, Alabama, bringing with them the world's most beautiful granddaughter and a 14-pound ham that some nice folks left on their doorstep. They needed assistance eating that much ham, so naturally I volunteered to help them out of a tight spot.

**Five minutes later**, the first crisis arose. The ham, frozen, wrapped in rough cloth and layered with salt, had to be soaked 12 hours before cooking. That seemed simple enough to cure (no pun intended) until my wife discovered that her largest container was four inches too short to hold the ham.

Amateurs all, they wrung their hands and fretted. But resourceful person that I am, I spotted a large blue (empty) trash can standing beside the encyclopedias and suggested soaking the ham in said receptacle, waterproofing it with a plastic garbage bag.

They were astounded at my creativity. Hey, when you've roughed it as long as I have, you learn to see what *might* work when what's *supposed* to work won't.

**Twelve hours later**, one well-soaked, unfrozen oinker waited for the oven. Did I mention that when we removed the ham from my favorite blue trash can which had been in the family an entire generation that we found a wet surprise? It appears that in a 12-hour stretch a 14-pound ham and several gallons of water can exert enormous pressure on an elderly

trash can. (We now have a *new* blue trash can standing beside the encyclopedias, but that's another story.)

So there we were, ready to cook the now-thawed ham for two hours and 80 minutes as per the instructions. Which brought crisis number two arunning.

Pans that were too short on Christmas Eve to soak the frozen ham were too short on Christmas Day to cook the thawed ham. I knew right off that the blue trash can was a definite "No."

**Not to worry.** My son fetched his brand new Gator Survival King knife that came factory equipped with everything from fish hooks in the handle to a shackle wrench and minislingshot. It also boasted a 140 mm. stainless steel, heat-treated blade with a double-line staggered sawtooth design.

The solution had arrived! Number one son, moving like Rambo, deftly unsheathed the fierce blade and stalked the monster ham. We were bare moments away from victory.

The heat-treated blade performed exactly as advertised, slashing through that surly ham. Then it bounced. Young Rambo torqued up the pressure. The black-bladed knife bounced again. Then he turned to me and grunted, "Huh. Rambo done in by a hambone."

**All eyes turned** toward you-know-who. The family was depending on me to put the bacon on the table, so to speak. Then came my second flash of brilliance in 12 hours.

The troops huddled despondently around the ham as I unlocked the storage room searching for my Sears hatchet. Despair—I had intended to buy a hatchet last Saturday but neglected to do so. Then my eyes fell on my stainless steel Sears limb loppers with the spongy stuff on the handles.

As I wiped the bark off the limb lop-

pers, my unbelieving wife rolled her eyes and said something unkind. The poor woman didn't understand that I had a written, lifetime guarantee from Sears standing behind those loppers. Just last week, they had sliced off tree limbs so big it startled me. That swine had met its match.

**They all moved away** from the ham when I unlimbered the loppers. My first cut removed four inches of ham. Then I slipped the loppers around the exposed hambone, squeezed hard and smiled in triumph at the solid *c-r-u-n-c-h*.

I couldn't believe my eyes. That must have been the toughest hog in Red Bay, because my Sears limb loppers barely made a dent. It was like trying to cut steel pipe.

**Steel pipe** — sure. I called my smart son-in-law, explained about the ham, the survival knife and the limb loppers. Ten minutes later he arrived with an evil grin, the world's most handsome grandson and a hacksaw. Took him 30 seconds to cut through the hambone. And all day to stop snickering at me about the limb loppers. Some people are so mean.

Two hours and 80 minutes later, the conquered, cooked and pan-contained Christmas ham lay subdued alongside a head of lettuce and tomato slices. I couldn't decide whether to eat it or bury it with full military honors.

**The survival knife** returned to its sheath, the Sears limb loppers to the storage room, the hacksaw to its tool chest, the kids went home. But the campaign to subdue that Christmas ham is now firmly entrenched in our holiday memory's hall of fame.

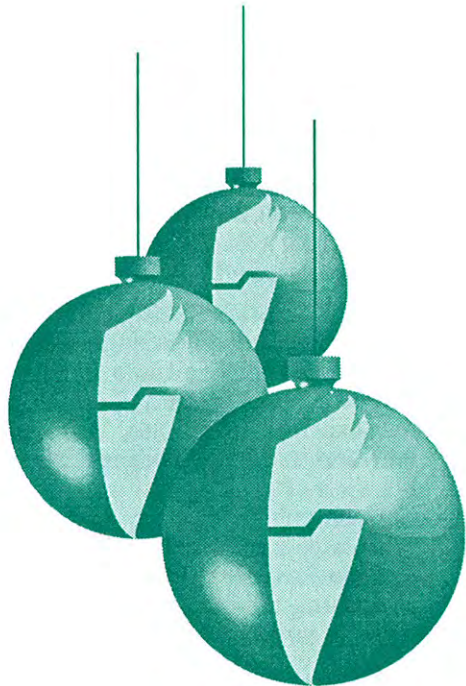
I thought I'd drop by Sears next week to see if someone in the lawn and garden department knows how to supercharge limb loppers. ■

CONTACT

P. O. Box 5002

Antioch, Tennessee 37011-5002

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