

LUKE 2: THERE'S MORE
TO THE STORY
THAN WE REALIZE

IS THERE
LIFE AFTER NINETY
CHRISTMASES?

"PAPA PANOV'S
SPECIAL CHRISTMAS"
BY LEO TOLSTOY

Magazine New Wine

December 1985 \$1.95

CHRISTMAS

How it can change your life



Good news

July 18th '85

God Bless!

Arrived the day 6-4 we start vacation — which is what I was praying for. Can you picture a group of Christians — a family gathering together in the great North Woods of Minnesota — (Itasca State Park) and playing this music to worship God? WOW and double WOW! This music has power. It draws you into praise and worship. Thank you. And God Bless you.

Sincere love in Christ
Kathy Knuth

(A COPY OF
THE FIRST
HOSANNA! MUSIC
LETTER WE
RECEIVED.)



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The life of a little-known Christmas character is an example for us today.



Ships in bottles amaze us but life's great mystery came 2,000 years ago.



In our Christmas story, Papa Panov displays the spirit of the season.

Christmas is a time for spectacular praise

"The Magnifi Cat"

BY BRUCE LONGSTRETH

What kind of animal is a *magnifi cat*?"

"I'm not sure I know what you mean, Peter."

"The priest said that next week the magnifi cat was going to be at our church."

"Oh, *that* magnifi cat. It's not a cat. It's a song."

"A song about a cat?"

"No, there's no animal involved. It's the song that Mary, the mother of Jesus, sang when He was born."

"I remember angels, sheep, shepherds, cows, and wise men, but don't recall any cat."

"Forget the cat, Peter. It's Mary's song in Luke 1:46-55. In Latin it starts, '*Magnificat anima mea Dominum*.' Maybe you've heard it in English: 'My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior.'"

"*Magnificat*...magnify. They're the same words, huh? Why didn't he just say they were going to have the 'magnify' at church instead of trying to be so fancy?"

To this day I don't know whether Peter was putting me on or not. But every Christmas I think about our conversation and the word that best describes this season, *magnify*.

Magnify means "to make great, glorious, splendid, grand, gorgeous, superb, princely, stately." Christmas is a time for souls to make a "spectacular spectacle" of praise to the Lord God. Sometimes, however, the soul shrinks back from the rush of Christmas. Offended at the tinsel, the bright lights, the Santas, and the rudeness of salesclerks, it may even

become self-righteous and draft ponderous theological studies on the evils of the Christmas celebration when it should be shouting, "Glory to God!"

I like Christmas. Oh, my soul is as susceptible as anyone's to holiday shrinkage, but there is so much that's right about this exuberant season: joyful children, friendly neighbors, caroling, Christmas pageants, and precious family times with aunts, uncles, cousins, and grandparents.

More than that, Christmas is a reminder. It calls on the saints to remember the Lord for the incomparable thing He did for all mankind. In the incarnation of His Son, Jesus, God became more than laws on tables of stone. He became flesh. He came to suffer our temptations and pain, and to become our deliverer. "My soul doth magnify the Lord."

While others find no room for nativity scenes in the public square, my soul is enlarged as it seeks to encompass the sights and sounds of the Incarnation. What a glorious night: the heavens ablaze with innumerable angels praising the birth of the King; shepherds rushing to Bethlehem to see the word of the angels fulfilled; Mary waiting in wonder until the inspired words of a song that could no longer be silenced poured through grateful lips. "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior."

Christmas is not a time for indignant souls to fight to "put Christ back in Christmas" or for self-righteous ones to take Him out. It is a time for every soul to

make great the name of the Lord God for His great gift. It is a time to command our souls to sing, to raise from deep within a praise that joins the angelic host in saying, "Glory to God in the highest!"

With the hope that it may help keep your soul from shrinking and help lift you to a level of praise you've never reached before, we offer this Christmas edition of *New Wine*. It begins with an article by Don Basham, who notes the faithfulness of two often overlooked figures in the Christmas story. Next, Charles Simpson shares the mystery of the Christmas season: God made flesh. And at this time of year when we so quickly say, "Peace on earth," you'll enjoy the interview with Charles Green, who is working to bring peace and unity to God's people.

You'll find other Christmas surprises throughout *New Wine's* pages, including, as always, our annual Christmas story. This year it's "Papa Panov's Special Christmas," and it's sure to delight children of all ages.

Our wish to you this holiday season is that the joy it brings will not be packed up and put away with the lights and ornaments once December is over, but that the joy of Christmas will be yours year round. This Christmas may we all share His joy, express His goodness, and share His salvation as we renew our souls in the goodness and greatness of God, for "He who is mighty has done great things." □



Bruce Longstreth is editor of *New Wine* and *Fathergram*.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



"Dear New Wine,"

A Word on "The Word"

We thank you for the monthly "Word." Ever since you initiated this feature we have been using it for the basis of our daily devotions.

Also, the current issue of *New Wine*, "Guidance" (October), is just what my husband and I needed.

Ruth Foster
South Hadley, MA

"Attention, Please"

When a wonderful article followed the dramatic title "Attention, Please" ("Homespun," October), we wanted a particular detail to be correct. Mount St. Helens blew her top on May 18, 1980, not May 19! This decapitated peak is the pride of our Skamania County and a fulfillment of Psalm 46:1-3.

Doug and Betty Hopkins
Carson, WA

Pray for the Family Farm

We were encouraged to hear

about the Kingdom Farm ("Cream of the Crop," September). God has blessed these people as they have depended on Him.

Because agriculture has reached a critical point in North America, please pray for the family farm. It has proven to be the most efficient kind of agriculture and has fostered a way of life that is invaluable. The problem that needs to be urgently solved is the financing of young farmers who do not have their father's farm equity behind them. Pray for all of us in that situation.

Also pray for agribusiness. Problems here affect all of us as we try to balance the books at home and still feed our families.

Gary and Grace Forget
Ontario, Canada

Needed Encouragement

Thank you for your article "Portrait of a Phony" ("The Way I See It," August). When I began reading it, I thought you were

going to make fun of those young ministers who give up because of church opposition. (Sorry for that thought.)

But as I kept on reading I realized you were denouncing the kinds of things I'm going through right now. It really moved me because I thought I was alone in this situation. Now, I know many have given up serving because of it, but I am encouraged to keep on going and not to give up.

I've been working for a little evangelical fellowship (for free) since January, and I felt like giving up more than once. But the Lord wants me here (I can see by the fruit). I've been deeply hurt so many times by satisfied and jealous people but this afternoon I learned that the Lord is grieved too by what I'm suffering, and I thank you again for telling everybody (at least *New Wine* readers) the way it is.

Name Withheld

Getting Rid of the Worm

The August issue has an article, "The Worm Complex," that really helps me. I am a part of a young ministry and as we move into new areas of God's word, Satan tries to push me into feeling that I'm a bigger and bigger worm. Even though I have to battle with feeling inadequate in my service to the Lord, I know that He has gone before me and all I have to do is be obedient and willing.

Thank you for the August issue. Everything in it has reaffirmed my feelings about getting the job done.

Jewel Ivey
Henderson, NC

A Good Reference

We have saved our *New Wine* magazines for years. This week

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New Wine Tape of the Month, *Fathergram*,
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Nuevo (Spanish edition of *New Wine*)

New Wine Magazine seeks to promote the unity
and maturity of the Church and individual Chris-
tians by presenting sound biblical teachings and
testimonies from a variety of Christian authors.

New Wine will carefully consider all unsolicited
manuscripts, although we cannot return them
unless accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped
envelope. (Please note we do not publish poetry.)

my seven year old asked me
whether Halloween was good or
bad and I was able to pull out
last October's magazine with
"Unmasking Halloween" to help
me answer his questions.

Diane Chrislip
Eudora, KS

An Evangelism Tool

We are a young couple that
the Lord has saved and challenged
to follow and know Him better. A
month ago we went to see some
friends who gave us a copy of
your magazine. After we read it,
the Lord stirred up our spirits to
pray for you and your ministry,
which God has raised up to min-
ister to the needs of the Church in
these last days. Already we have
managed to share the messages in
your May issue ("A Fresh Move
of the Spirit") with a number of
families, and the response is quite
encouraging.

Mr. and Mrs. Mutemi
Mutua
Nairobi, Kenya

Hosanna! Music a Blessing

Fantastic! Praise the Lord!
My first Hosanna! Music tape
was such a blessing. I can't imag-
ine them getting better but just
like *New Wine* and Tape of the
Month, I know they will. I was
making blackberry jam when I
first heard the tape. Best jam I
ever made.

Bonnie Freesen
Bluffs, IL

Out of the Pit

The July issue ("Staying on
Course"), as others have, min-
istered to me when I was just re-
covering from pitfalls caused by
the enemy. I ran aground! Still,
God forgives. It is really a tough
position to be one of the leaders
in one's church. It really hurts
when you fail. But God is not

searching for perfect people, but
for available and teachable ones.
Praise God! Jesus restored my
self-esteem.

Name withheld

Joy on the Job

Your September issue ("Work-
ing 9 to 5: It's More Than Just a
Living") was an answer to
prayer. My job was becoming
stagnant to me, although the
Lord has abundantly blessed me
in it financially. Yet I was
discouraged and desiring to
move on.

I read the magazine from cover
to cover, and in each article the
Lord dealt with me in the areas of
my outlook toward my job.

I know now that I will remain
in this job, and through prayer
and the Scripture references I
will rearrange my thinking
toward my co-workers, bosses,
and attitudes of ministry to
them. Thank you so much.

Karen Crain
Los Alamos, NM

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THE WORD

December 1985

I Believe in the Apostolic Church Because...

I. Men Are Called to Fulfill God's Purpose

A. Noah	Gen. 6:1-22; Heb. 11:7	Dec. 1
B. Abraham	Gen. 12:1-9; Rom. 4:1-25	Dec. 2
C. Moses	Ex. 3:1-22; Heb. 3:1-6	Dec. 3
D. Amos	Amos 7:10-17	Dec. 4
E. Joseph	Mt. 1:18-25	Dec. 5
F. Zechariah	Lk. 1:1-23, 57-80	Dec. 6
G. Simeon	Lk. 2:25-35	Dec. 7
H. John the Baptist	Jn. 1:19-42	Dec. 8
I. Peter	Mt. 16:13-20; Jn. 21:15-23	Dec. 9
J. Paul	Acts 9:1-22	Dec. 10
K. Timothy	1 Tim. 1:12-20; 4:11-16; 6:11-21	Dec. 11
L. Titus	Ti. 1:1-3:15	Dec. 12
M. Philemon and Onesimus	Phile. 1-25	Dec. 13

II. Men Are Authorized to Rule in God's Kingdom—The Principle of Delegated Authority

A. The apostles	Mt. 4:18-22; Mk. 3:13-19; Jn. 15:1-27	Dec. 14
B. The Church	Mt. 18:15-20; Jn. 20:19-23	Dec. 15
C. Peter	Acts 5:1-11	Dec. 16
D. Paul (to Rome)	Rom. 1:1-17	Dec. 17
E. Paul (to Galatia)	Gal. 1:1-24	Dec. 18
F. Epaphras, Paul's fellow servant	Col. 1:1-14	Dec. 19

III. Men Are Recognized by Others as Chosen of God

A. Receive the messenger as Christ	Mt. 10:40-42	Dec. 20
B. Seeing Jesus in the one sent	Mt. 23:37-39	Dec. 21
C. Apostles' doctrine and decrees	Acts 2:41-47; 16:4-5	Dec. 22
D. God's word and apostles' word the same	1 Th. 2:13-16; 4:1-8	Dec. 23
E. Those who have the rule	Heb. 13:17; Acts 20:28	Dec. 24
F. The foundation of the Church	Eph. 2:19-22	Dec. 25
G. Gifts to the Church	Eph. 4:11-13	Dec. 26

IV. Men Are Portrayed as Fellow Workers With God

A. Ambassadors	2 Cor. 5:20	Dec. 27
B. Stewards	Ti. 1:5-9	Dec. 28
C. Servants	1 Cor. 4:1-13	Dec. 29
D. Fathers	1 Cor. 4:14-21	Dec. 30
E. Colaborers	1 Cor. 3:1-9	Dec. 31

A monthly Bible study by Bruce Longstreth



Two elderly saints, whose
one day heard

"MES

BY DON

When we think about the birth of Christ as it is recorded in the Gospels, certain characters and incidents immediately come to mind.

We remember how the angel Gabriel appeared to Mary, telling her she would conceive and bear a son and would name Him Jesus. We remember another angel instructing Joseph not to be afraid to take Mary as his wife.

We remember the census ordered by Caesar, and how Mary

and Joseph made the difficult journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem right at the end of Mary's pregnancy. We remember how they were turned away at the inn and took refuge in a stable, where the baby Jesus was born.

Then, we see shepherds bathed with the glory of God, standing on a hillside, listening in wonder as an angel announced the birth of the Savior. We see the heavenly host that accompanied the angel proclaiming peace on earth,

and we see the mysterious star that the wise men followed to Bethlehem, where they could present to Jesus their gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

These are the characters that are part of every telling of the Christmas story. But two other people who played an integral part in the events of that holy time are usually mentioned only in passing if at all. They are Simeon and Anna.

Jesus was just over a month

lives are examples for us,
the Holy Spirit whisper

SIAH!"

BASHAM



ITC Entertainment Limited

old when, according to custom, Mary and Joseph brought Him to the temple in Jerusalem to be dedicated to God. Upon entering the temple courtyard, they were met in succession by two elderly people, Simeon and Anna, the last in a select retinue of individuals to whom God had sovereignly chosen to reveal the secret of His Son's birth.

When the Christmas story is told and Simeon and Anna are absent from it, much is lost

about the meaning of that event, for the lives of these two little-known characters demonstrate qualities that the Lord desires in us all.

Waiting for the Messiah

The Scriptures furnish only a few facts about Simeon; nevertheless they are sufficient for us to draw some fairly accurate conclusions about the kind of man he was. His description as "a man in Jerusalem" who was "righteous

and devout" would probably have fit many sincere Jewish men in the city—not just priests and Levites but tradesmen and merchants as well (Lk. 2:25 NIV). Although some scholars suggest Simeon might have been a rabbi or a priest, the Scriptures offer no hint of that. The man in Jerusalem could just as easily have been a successful Jewish merchant.

But one characteristic set Simeon apart from all other men. The Bible says, "He was waiting for



*Surely Anna had low
days, but they never
persuaded her to leave
her vigil.*

the consolation of Israel" (v. 25 NIV). Simeon was one of those sincere Jews who expected the Messiah to appear. The same verse adds, "...and the Holy Spirit was upon him." That simple addition to the text places Simeon in the unique group of Bible characters who had an intimate, personal relationship with the Holy Spirit before He became available to God's people as a whole on the day of Pentecost.

In what additional ways the Spirit made Himself known to

Simeon we are not told. But the Bible does tell us the Holy Spirit had told him he would live to see the Messiah (see verse 26). It is not too difficult to imagine the effect of that revelation upon his life—it must have been a powerful continuing influence on all that he said and did, making him feel special and cherished.

A Promise Fulfilled

I cannot help but wonder if he shared with his family and friends this private revelation. If

so, did they believe him or did they consider him some kind of religious fanatic? And how many years had he lived with that blessed hope? Probably no other Jew in Jerusalem nursed in his breast such a precious secret.

What does a man yearn most to see or achieve before he dies? Wealth? Reputation? Not Simeon! His one burning passion in life was to live long enough to see the fulfillment of God's promise that he would see the Lord, a promise that inspired him to a righteous and devout life.

Then, at last, the day came. One sunlit morning no different than a thousand others on which Simeon had arisen to offer prayers and praises to God, his worship turned into a sudden, glad urgency that quickly permeated his whole being. He knew he had to go to the temple immediately! The scripture says, "Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts" (v. 27 NIV).

Imagine Simeon standing in the temple courtyard when Mary and Joseph approached with the infant Jesus. His eyes must have riveted on the child as his whole being resonated to the triumphant note sounded by the Holy Spirit within him: "Messiah!"

As if he had trained and rehearsed for the moment, Simeon swept the baby Jesus up in his arms, and with eyes lifted in gratitude toward heaven, began praising God for fulfilling His word.

"Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you now dismiss your servant in peace. For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all people, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel" (vv. 29-32 NIV).

Mary and Joseph's surprise at having their infant son unexpect-

edly lifted from their grasp may have been exceeded only by their surprise at the prophetic words pouring from Simeon's lips. Until then, the revelation of the divine destiny of their son had foretold only His redemptive role for the children of Israel. Now this prophetic bearded stranger, holding their son so lovingly and tenderly, described Him as "a light for the revelation of the Gentiles."

Simeon's one moment of glory did not end until he had also blessed the parents and brought additional prophecy concerning the ministry of Jesus and the mother's pain that Mary would one day experience because of her son's redemptive mission. Then, the moment that Simeon had awaited so long was over. He returned the baby Jesus to His parents and strode from the temple.

We are not told how long Simeon lived. Perhaps that very day after he returned rejoicing to his own home, the Lord summoned him like Jacob, who when he "had finished giving instructions to his sons, he drew his feet up into the bed, breathed his last and was gathered to his people" (Gen. 49:33 NIV).

But could a servant of God ask for a better end—to breathe his last knowing that he had been faithful and that God had kept His promise?

"Well done, good and faithful servant!...Come and share your master's happiness!" (Mt. 25:21 NIV).

Sixty Years of Devotion

As Simeon concluded his prophetic remarks, handed the baby Jesus back to His parents, and walked away, Anna, an eighty-four-year-old prophetess, appeared. The Scriptures furnish enough detail about Anna's life for us to marvel at her faithfulness as well. Widowed after only seven years of marriage, she had worshiped in the temple at Jeru-

salem day and night for at least sixty years. The Scriptures tell us that like Simeon, she also was looking for the Messiah, and the "redemption of Jerusalem" (Lk. 2:38 NIV).

Undoubtedly, Anna had spent many days and nights specifically praying and fasting for Jesus' coming and for the establishment of His messianic rule in Israel. So when Joseph and Mary entered the temple courts with the baby Jesus, she too began to thank God for allowing her to see the Lord's Christ, and rushed to tell other worshipers at the temple that He was indeed the Messiah.

In some ways, Anna's story is even more touching than Simeon's. The Scriptures suggest that Simeon led a fairly normal life in Jerusalem. But from the time she was widowed, Anna never left the temple, spending sixty years of her life in daily devotion to the Lord. Both she and Simeon longed for the coming of the Messiah, but Anna had received no special revelation that she would actually live to see Him. How much more touching then was her surprise, her joy, and her sense of wonder when one glorious day the Holy Spirit turned her attention to a special young couple bringing its baby son into the temple for dedication.

Outwardly they certainly must have seemed no different than hundreds, perhaps thousands, of young families she had seen enter the temple through the passing years, coming to present their firstborn sons to the Lord. Yet that day, as her gaze fell on one particular infant held in the embrace of loving parents, she heard the Holy Spirit whisper the thrilling word, "Messiah," and with a singing heart she rushed to catch a closer glimpse of Him.

Two faithful, elderly Jews, sharing a common messianic hope, met the holy family for a

few brief moments in the temple courtyard of Jerusalem, then went their separate ways rejoicing because they saw the Lord's Christ.

Simeon and Anna's Message

The stories of Simeon and Anna represent to us something more significant than merely two additional signs attesting to the birth of the Lord. They represent day-by-day, year-by-year faithfulness. The lives of these two elderly saints display qualities such as patience, commitment, loyalty, and sacrifice. They produced a consistent record of faithfulness.

The Scriptures offer no hint that Simeon was a hero; he lived his life in quiet response to the word he had received from the Lord. No doubt there were times when he wondered if he had heard from God at all. Yet he persevered and God engraved the record of his life in holy Scripture.

It is the same with Anna—sixty years in the temple, worshipping day and night, praying and fasting. For many of today's Christians, such a regimen sounds more like drudgery than devotion, more like punishment than privilege. But perhaps that's because so much of our praying today is primarily an expression of what we want God to do for us, rather than the daily offering of ourselves for His use. So often our petitions fail to be preceded by grateful praise flowing from hearts determined to give God the glory due His name. Surely Anna had her low and doubting days as well, but such days never persuaded her to leave her sacred vigil.

In all the mystery and miracle, joy and high excitement of Christmas, let us not fail to see that the quality of life demonstrated by Simeon and Anna is needed more desperately in the Church today than perhaps in any previous age.



**These two little-known
characters demonstrate
qualities the Lord desires
in us all.**

Behind the Glitter

During this season, much of the western world pauses to sing "Joy to the world! the Lord is come," and "Hark! the herald angels sing, 'Glory to the newborn King.'" But those lofty words of praise to the Lord Jesus—sung by many who do not know Him at all and by many more who offer only lip service to His lordship—resound but for the moment. At season's end, their noble sentiments will evaporate "like ropes of sand which perish in the twisting."

In the midst of so much high

resolve, there is so little substantive performance; in the midst of so much confusion and change, there is so little constancy.

Saddled with an instant-coffee, instant-credit, fast-food, and a faster-divorce society, and our self-centered, complacent, doubting churches, we desperately need every example of fidelity, steadfastness, and commitment we can hoist into view.

For all the gracious, supernatural moving of the Holy Spirit in the last twenty years and for all the mountains of testimonies to answered prayer, Christians to-

day seem to find it more difficult to maintain a consistent walk with the Lord, more difficult to live in covenant love with their fellow Christians, and more difficult to cope with the pains and pressures of daily living than ever.

Believers are assailed on one side by responsibilities too heavy to carry and problems too complex to solve, and on the other side by claims that suggest the Christian life offers instant answers and God will solve all problems quickly and meet all needs miraculously. Soon they become discouraged when "claiming the promises" falls short, and the expected signs and wonders are slow to appear. Those with faith born of seed sown on rocky soil quickly wither for lack of root and become lost, if not permanently, then at least to the present purposes of God. Where is the emphasis in their lives on discipline and endurance, on meeting the trials of faith with the constancy and the steadfastness that the Scriptures also commend?

Faith and Steadfastness

Sober hints about the need for that kind of endurance and steadfastness are found in the concluding words of Simeon's prophecy over the holy family.

While the heavenly host sang about peace on earth and goodwill to men, while the angel that appeared to Mary and Joseph exalted the coming child as Savior and Immanuel, and while wise men came bearing precious gifts to one they acknowledged as King of the Jews, it remained for faithful old Simeon to glimpse—in the midst of all the glory—the steadfastness and suffering that Christ's holy mission would require. It was Simeon who identified the precious babe nestling momentarily in his arms not only as Messiah, but also as the cause of "the falling and rising of many

in Israel," and as "a sign that will be spoken against" (v. 34 NIV). Among all those to whom God had revealed the secret of His Son's coming, Simeon alone saw the shadow of the cross on the holy infant's cradle, and spoke of the pain and heartache His destiny would cause His mother.

It is only in Simeon's words that we catch the foreboding hint of a time when this same holy child, so lovingly carried by His parents to the temple for dedication, would, as an obedient Son bent on doing His Father's will, return to Jerusalem to endure the terrible, inevitable hour of His destiny.

Even at Christmas—perhaps especially at Christmas—we should remember that God the Father is glorified not only in supernatural signs and miracles, as wonderful and as needed as they are. He is also glorified in the faithful, quietly consistent lives of nameless saints the world over who find His unfailing help in hardship and who gratefully experience the enduring light of His love in valleys too dark to tread alone. I believe Simeon and Anna must have been people like that.

I Remember Grandma

When I read about Anna, I often remember my paternal grandmother, whom I never fully appreciated while she was alive. My grandfather, a poor Arkansas dirt farmer, died when my father was only nine years old, leaving Grandma to raise her family alone. Hard and grueling years followed, but with iron determination and a strong faith in God, Grandma made it through.

From childhood memories I can recall only her final years—frail, almost deaf, and quavery voiced—when she was only a shadow of the hardworking, strong-willed woman who toiled

and sacrificed during the earlier years of her widowhood. In those last years, although Grandma insisted on living alone in another city, she sometimes visited us for weeks on end, spending most of her waking hours in our guest room, quilting, praying, reading her Bible, and dipping snuff. (She never saw any inconsistency in holding a bit of sweet tobacco under her tongue and voicing the unshakable spiritual convictions that identified her as a Cumberland Presbyterian.)

When I would pass the door to her room, she often called me inside to stand beside the small table holding her Bible and her can of snuff. In her shaky voice, she would read to me stories from the Bible and talk to me very earnestly about its characters. I was awed by her knowledge of Scripture and her great age, but on those occasions I'm afraid I usually felt more awkward than reverent. Although I had no knowledge then of the earlier years when only her strong faith sustained her, even at my young age I was convinced that no one knew more about God and the Bible than Grandma—not even my Baptist Sunday school teacher.

A Spiritual Secret

The summer I was sixteen, in that same pleasant guest room, Grandma became seriously ill, slipping into a coma that lasted for more than a month. But as her frail body wasted away, her mind and spirit were free to relive all kinds of vivid religious experiences. Sometimes I would sit in a chair beside her nurse and listen as she relived the days of brush-arbor revivals and camp meetings. She would laugh and sing and praise the Lord, and converse with saints and evangelists long since passed away. Then, one quiet summer afternoon she slipped out of this life to join

those same saints in what must have been one grand reunion.

Decades later, after I became an author and Bible teacher traveling in extensive ministry across the country, my mother told me for the first time how one day many years before, when I was still quite small, Grandma had shared a spiritual secret with her.

"Eileen," Grandma had said, "when I was praying for your three sons this morning, God spoke to me and told me one of them will be greatly used in ministering His Word."

Like Anna, Grandma Basham was a woman whose widowhood drove her into the heart of God. Heaven only knows the hours and days she spent interceding for her family. I am convinced that my public ministry today stands—in part—as the fruit of her earnest prayers.

This Christmas, perhaps more than ever, we need Simeons and Annas who have not only caught a vision of the kingdom of God and have an assurance of the coming of the Lord, but who are committed to a patient, faithful, step-by-step, day-by-day walk with the Holy Spirit—humble, loving servants of God who have taken to heart Paul's admonition: "Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up" (Gal. 6:9 NIV). □



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I have always been fascinated by ship models, especially those built in bottles. Oh, I know there are some models built and then the bottle is fabricated around the model to make it appear that the ship was built while inside. But some models are actually put together inside the bottle by a skilled craftsman with intricate tools. The entire project is designed to provoke a sense of mystery and awe.

What has confounded me even more is the mystery of a simple seed that has locked within its tiny shell the design and substance for a great tree. Most living organisms spring from small seeds, and manage to conceal the secrets of their existence in other seeds that they reproduce.

There is, however, a mystery more grand than ships in bottles and seeds that grow. The Apostle Paul declares his own wonder in 1 Timothy 3:16: "And by common confession great is the mystery of godliness: He who was revealed in the flesh..." (NAS). The Incarnation, or God made flesh, is the mystery of time and eternity. The Incarnation is the ultimate form of all revelation.

A Mystery

The night Christ was born, angels sang in the presence of men. Excited shepherds followed their instructions to find the baby Jesus and His amazed parents. Luke 2:18 says, "And all who heard it wondered at the things which were told them by the shepherds" (NAS). Nearly two thousand years later multitudes of people still wonder at the things the shepherds said.

The annual celebration of Christmas, or of God becoming flesh, is designed to make us do just that. It is there to make us pause and renew our sense of mystery and awe toward this great event that changed human history. It is a time to cut

through the glitter and tinsel and get to the essence of the matter—the mystery. Our purpose is not to analyze and understand the Incarnation. That is impossible. But as we look at the history of the Incarnation and what God was saying through it, we can behold it and stand in awe and give thanks to God.

Foretold by Prophets

It is a matter of record that many servants of God knew that He would send a special leader. This leader was variously seen as the "seed of woman"; a prophet like Moses; "Shiloh," who would bear the scepter for Judah; "the son of David"; "the branch"; "Immanuel"; and many other designations.

A great part of the mystery that surrounds the birth of Jesus Christ has to do with the prophetic descriptions of His tribe, His family, His place of birth, His character, His spiritual power, and His messianic purpose. Even the skeptic is hard pressed to deal with the fact that His birth and life are foretold by many different men living at different times. The prophetic pronouncements, as well as the events themselves, are a mystery.

One of the most astounding passages is Isaiah's account of the Messiah's crucifixion recorded in Isaiah chapter 53. No account in the Scriptures, including those in the New Testament, better describes that event than Isaiah's. Not only does he foresee specific aspects of Jesus' life, such as His virgin birth, His rejection, His grief, His scourging, His death among wicked men, and His burial in a rich man's grave, but he sees the purpose: atonement. Isaiah sees that Jesus would bear our griefs and carry our sorrows. He would die for us. The chapter begins with a reference to the virgin birth. It culminates in His death for the

sins of many. Isaiah understood that Jesus' birth could not be fully appreciated apart from His life's mission to be our sin offering. Every outstanding person's birth is celebrated because of his life's work. So it was to be with Jesus.

Such a revelation of messianic mission, occurring seven hundred years before the historical event, could only come by divine inspiration.

Prophetic revelation concerning Jesus Christ continued up until the birth of John the Baptist, approximately six months before the birth of Jesus. The prophecies came to Joseph, Mary, Zechariah, and Elizabeth. Even at Jesus' dedication at the temple, the old priest Simeon and the widow Anna had prophetic illumination concerning His life. Thus, they continued in the stream of all of those throughout the old covenant who saw the messianic mission.

A Historical Event

Galatians 4:4 says that the Incarnation happened in the fullness of time. The stage of history was sovereignly set by God. Everything was ready. God had preserved the seed of His choice—Noah's son Shem, Abraham and his son Isaac, Jacob and his son Judah, and so on it went as God selected David and then promised him that one of his descendants would rule eternally.

However, when the time finally arrived, and God alone knew the day, something special had to happen. From the beginning God had declared that the One who would bruise Satan's head would be the seed of woman, not the seed of Adam. Isaiah had further declared, by divine inspiration, that a virgin would conceive. All of the prophets had pointed to a ruler whose birth was to be exceptional. Herein lies the greatest mystery of all.

A Greater Mystery

We stand in awe at many things
in life, but one event surpasses them all.

BY CHARLES SIMPSON



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R.S.V.P.—Please let us know you're coming and feel free to bring a friend. Space is limited, so fill out the postpaid card opposite this announcement and drop it in the mail today!

Mary apparently was unaware that she had been selected by the Almighty as the woman whose seed would receive the eternal seed—the Word of God. She was (apparently) attending to her normal duties when the divinely appointed messenger arrived and revealed himself to her. His appearance was overwhelming. His message was even more so.

"Hail, favored one! The Lord is with you" (Lk. 1:28 NAS).

Mary was troubled.

The messenger continued:

"Do not be afraid, Mary; for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb, and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever; and His kingdom will have no end" (vv. 30-33 NAS).

Shocked by the angel's pronouncement, Mary asked, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" (v. 34 NAS).

The messenger answered:

"The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy offspring shall be called the Son of God" (v. 35 NAS).

To any one of us this would be beyond comprehension. But to Mary, a young Jewess who feared God, revered King David, and had a strong notion of messianic hope, such a message must have been overwhelming. Nevertheless, her response was, "Be it done to me according to your word" (v. 38 NAS).

There are several important elements to notice in this encounter:

1. Mary did not choose to be the

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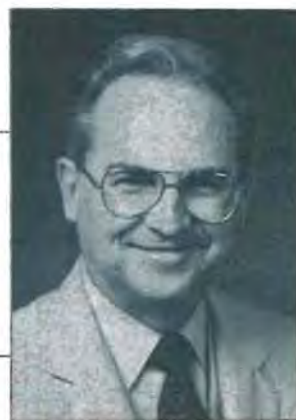
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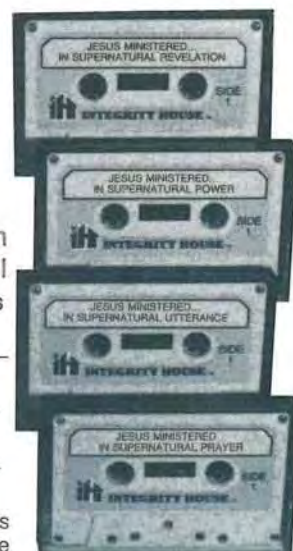
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NEW 4-tape series by Charles Simpson—to order see other side!

“He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father.”

Jn. 14:12

Have you seen the reality of that scripture functioning in your life? If not, Charles Simpson's newly-released 4-tape series may be just for you!

Charles shows you that when Jesus came into this world He emptied Himself of His divine power. All that Jesus did on earth came out of His dependence on the Holy Spirit. Jesus ministered to people through words of knowledge and wisdom, prophetic utterances, and the power to heal and to cast

out evil spirits—all from the Holy Spirit.

The same power of the Holy Spirit that Jesus walked in is available to you today. The purpose of the series is to enlarge your vision to include all that God wants to accomplish through you. You'll learn how to become a more useful instrument of the Holy Spirit, and how to yield yourself more fully to what the Holy Spirit wants to do through your life.

Charles discusses four aspects of Jesus' ministry you need to know about:

Supernatural Revelation

Jesus ministered out of divine revelation from the Holy Spirit. All His ministry was done in the light of what the Spirit showed Him. Charles shows how you too can minister out of that same revelation through three particular gifts: the word of wisdom, the word of knowledge, and the discernment of spirits. Through these gifts, the Spirit enables you to more effectively help others come to repentance and a stronger reliance on God.

Supernatural Power

Jesus ministered through the power that the Holy Spirit gave Him. People were drawn to Him because everywhere He went something happened. Jesus operated in the realm of the miraculous—healing the sick, casting out demons, and moving in supernatural faith. Charles shows you how the Holy Spirit can give you the same power to minister in those realms so that you can accomplish His purposes today. You'll begin to expect God to use you in new and exciting ways!

Supernatural Utterance

In this tape Charles deals with the power of the tongue and how Jesus used that power as an instrument of God. He shows how God wants you to use your words to encourage and bring life to others as Jesus did. Besides helping you to understand the significance of your everyday words, Charles also deals with the gift of prophecy and the vital part it played in Jesus' ministry. He outlines the characteristics of a prophet and the discipline and accountability that a prophet must have.

Supernatural Prayer

Charles discusses the nature of prayer and demonstrates how in Jesus' life prayer flowed out of His relationship with the Father. Your ability to intercede depends on the quality of your relationship with God. You'll see the need to have a trusting and honest relationship with Him. Prayer must be the basis for everything you do just as it was for Jesus. Charles gives you a list of do's and don't's to help you to enter into a deeper prayer life.

Messiah's mother. She was chosen by God.

2. The word delivered by the messenger to Mary was the seed of Incarnation.

3. The Holy Spirit quickened the word spoken to her, and the power of the Most High overshadowed her.

4. Mary received the word in faith, and at that moment I believe Mary conceived the Son of God.

The Incarnation is a historical event. It happened in a particular woman, at a particular time, at a particular place, and resulted in a particular man: Jesus Christ. And as they say, "The rest is history."

A Life Principle

The Incarnation was more than an event that was foretold by prophets and that happened in the fullness of time. God was saying something through it.

Many years after Jesus was born, lived, died, rose again, and ascended, the Apostle Paul wrote to Timothy about the nature of godliness or godlikeness:

And by common confession great is the mystery of godliness: He who was revealed in the flesh, was vindicated in the Spirit, beheld by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory (1 Tim. 3:16 NAS).

The point Paul makes is not only that God became flesh in Christ and went through the process outlined in that verse, but that God's own nature requires incarnation and the subsequent process. God is not content with being aloof, a mere ideal, abstract, or untouched by humanity. Other people have such gods, but the God we worship is the one who was made flesh and dwelt among us. As the apostles John and Peter said: "We beheld



**There is a mystery more
grand than ships in bottles.
The Incarnation is the
mystery of time and
eternity.**

His glory" (see John 1:14 and 2 Peter 1:16). In Christ, we see the glory of God. In Christ, the glory of God becomes imminent. God becomes near to us.

From the biblical point of view, truth must always become flesh. It must work on earth as in heaven. Mary's faith in the word resulted in a physical conception. Our faith in His truth causes Him to become a reality in our physical lives. We are talking about more than mental assent. We are talking about a new nature and physical results.

Works Throughout History

Did you ever wonder why the

Bible was not written like a textbook, instead of a history book? I have. If I had written the Bible, I probably would have begun with several chapters on the nature of God, then moved on to the doctrine of man, and then on to various other important doctrines. That would be a typical theological approach. But God has not chosen to reveal Himself through doctrines. It seems that every time God has had a truth that He wanted to reveal to man, He revealed it through a human life.

In the beginning when He sought to reveal Himself, He created a man who looked like Him, and said, in effect, "Look,

this is what I am like." God seems to agree with the adage, "A picture is worth a thousand words."

When God chose to reveal what faith was like, He gave us Abraham. He told Abraham what He wanted him to do, and what He would do for him; then He put Abraham to various tests to try his belief in His word. Abraham passed those tests, and God was pleased. Hence, when we want to know about faith, we study not a doctrine, but a man's life.

So the Bible continues with Moses, Joshua, Samuel, David, and the prophets. Historically, God has put His truth in flesh, and we have every reason to believe that He still does.

Why the Incarnation Happened

The Old Testament begins with God making a man in His image. We are introduced to Adam. Adam was told what to do and what not to do, but he failed. The New Testament begins with God making Himself in the nature and image of a man. We are introduced to Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ succeeded where Adam failed. He obeyed and triumphed. Thus, we learn from these two examples that flesh alone cannot succeed. It is God in man—it is God in us—that overcomes and reveals His glory through us.

God became flesh to accomplish what mankind alone could not do—defeat our enemy, Satan, and atone for our transgressions. He also came in physical form to bridge the chasm erected by man's separation from God. Jesus was God made visible even to sinful mankind. "God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself" (2 Cor. 5:19 NAS). Jesus leaves mankind without excuse for not knowing who God is. He is divine nature, wisdom, and power revealed. Humanity beheld His glory.

On one occasion the Apostle Paul went to Athens to preach. Athens was a center of philosophy and polytheism. Athenians regularly gathered just to hear about new ideas, religions, and gods. So zealous were they in their desire to include all gods that they had an altar built to an unknown god. Paul stood before the altar to preach Jesus Christ to them. He proclaimed Jesus Christ as the God who made heaven and earth, was crucified, and rose again. He made Christ known to them.

The Incarnation happened so that the God who was not known might become known through Jesus Christ.

The incarnation of God in Christ Jesus is the greatest of all mysteries; because of it we are able to behold and know our God in the reality of humanity. The letter to the Colossians tells us that Jesus is the fullness of God (see Colossians 1:19). Christ, however, did more than grow up and become the fullness of God manifest in a model man. The Gospels tell us that He was crucified by those who rejected Him.

We see God in Christ at His birth and in His life. But nowhere does Christ reveal the nature of God more than when His heart and flesh are torn in crucifixion. From Him flows forgiveness, love, and a prayer for His torturers. The soldier standing there at the cross says it for all of us, "This man was the Son of God!" (Mk. 15:39 NAS).

But, thank God, it does not end even there. After Jesus conquered sin on the cross and conquered Satan in hell, He then arose from the grave and conquered death. Only then was the purpose of His incarnation complete, having revealed the nature of God, taught the ways of God, and then conquering sin, Satan, and death for us.

The irony and tragedy of this

beautiful event is that it is possible for one to celebrate it and miss the whole purpose of it. Mary did more than marvel at the mystery and message delivered to her by the angel. She received it. John, the beloved disciple of Jesus Christ, said, "As many as received him, to them he gave power to become the sons of God" (Jn. 1:12).

That is why it all happened two thousand years ago—so we could, by faith in Him, become the sons of God. Because Christ became flesh, was crucified, and rose again, we can by faith have the nature of God in us. By faith we can have Christ in us. And Christ in us alone is sufficient for our victory over sin and death. It is not merely knowing God in our minds, but it is having God in us relationally through Jesus Christ that brings triumph over the real issues of sin and death. It is when we receive the word of Christ in us, as Mary received it in her, that we can fall on our knees and say, "O holy night when Christ was born."

Because of the Incarnation we no longer have to live as defeated, impoverished, or superstitious prisoners of darkness. Because Christ clothed Himself in flesh, He was able to set us free from the bondage of our flesh. We celebrate the birth of Christ because it is the birth of our emancipator, our captain, our defender, our provider, our Lord, and our God! Glory to Him! □



Charles Simpson, senior pastor of Gulf Coast Covenant Church in Mobile, Alabama, ministers extensively in the United States and abroad. He also serves as the chairman of the Integrity Communications

Board of Directors. Charles resides in Mobile with his wife, Carolyn, and their children.



For 30,000 children helped by Project Angel Tree, December 25 won't be just another day

Unwrapping the Real Spirit of Christmas

BY BRENT BOLDS

What's this all about?" demanded a well-dressed woman as she eyed the Christmas tree decorated with paper angels set up in a shopping mall. She pulled her fur coat around herself and adjusted her packages as she waited for an answer.

A volunteer patiently explained it was all part of Project Angel Tree, a program sponsored by Prison Fellowship that provides Christmas gifts for children of inmates. She showed her how each paper angel on the tree contained a child's name along with four

gifts that he had requested. Shoppers could choose any angel they wanted, purchase the gifts, and bring them back to the volunteers, who would wrap them and then distribute them to the children in time for Christmas.

"I think that's just marvelous," the woman replied. "I'm here today to shop for my grandchildren, who have everything they could possibly ever want and don't appreciate any of it. I'd just as soon buy for children who have real needs!"

Project Angel Tree was begun three years ago in Birmingham,

Alabama, by Mary Kay Beard, Alabama state director for Prison Fellowship, to provide for children with real needs, those whose fathers or mothers were in prison. "That year we had two trees and gave gifts to seven hundred children," says Beard, who spent five and one-half years in prison. As an inmate, she found the Lord and went on to full-time prison ministry work. "We expanded year by year, adding trees all over the country. Last year we had sixty-one projects and helped more than ten thousand children." This Christmas,



Shoppers provide gifts for inmates' children by choosing an angel from the tree, and then buying some or all of the four gifts requested.

volunteers expect to set up two hundred trees and provide gifts for at least thirty thousand children.

Giving God's Love

The motivation behind this growing effort is to give because of God's love, rather than in response to the commercial aspect of Christmas, Beard says.

One man, for example, heard about Project Angel Tree on television and drove sixty miles to a mall where a tree was set up. He chose six angels from the branches and returned hours later with four gifts for each child. Over the next month he returned several times, and by the end of the project, he had provided gifts for eleven children.

The man's motives represent the kind of love that Beard describes: At one time he was a successful businessman, but a long

battle with alcoholism resulted in the loss of his business and family. When God healed him, he knew he wanted to give something in return.

Another angel tree was located in a mall in an affluent neighborhood with a large Jewish population. One Jewish woman noticed the display and asked a volunteer about the project. She listened to the explanation, and then sat down at the table and wrapped gifts for two hours. "This is the best gift I've ever had!" she joyfully told the other volunteers.

One young man—about twenty-two years old, unmarried, and manager of one of the stores in a mall where an angel tree project was generating excitement—looked over a tree and began to tell the volunteers about his own childhood. His mother had been widowed and left with five young

children to raise, and was forced to turn to welfare.

"But there's one thing that Mom always told us," he said. "There's no shame in accepting help from others as long as you do everything you can for yourself. And then make sure you help someone else when you have the chance. So that's what I want to do today—help someone else."

He examined every angel on the tree before finally deciding on one requesting a gift for a newborn infant whose mother had simply listed a layette set.

"That's it!" the young man exclaimed as he quickly headed for a department store in the mall. Suddenly he stopped and turned around.

"Wait a minute!" he shouted to a volunteer. "What's a layette set?"

A Surprise Gift

Even more touching than the stories of the givers are the accounts about the children who receive the gifts. The volunteers who deliver the presents to inmates' families often recall their experiences with tears in their eyes.

One volunteer, who was delivering gifts to an inmate's three children, had on board his pickup truck three special presents: shiny new bicycles for each of them. When he arrived at their house, he asked the children to help him carry in the packages. One by one they brought in the smaller gifts, leaving the bikes on the truck, and when they were finished they met him in the house. Suddenly the volunteer realized what happened. The children didn't know that the bikes were for them. When he told them, with tears in their eyes they said they expected only "practical" things for Christmas, like clothes. They didn't even dream they would get bicycles.

Another volunteer, his car piled

with gifts for a family of five children, was greeted at the door by their mother. The malnourished woman showed him into the living room where a well-worn couch was the only furniture on the bare wooden floor. There was no Christmas tree or any other sign of the holiday season. One by one her five children shyly entered the room, and although it was only a few days before Christmas and already the dead of winter, the man was shocked to see that the youngsters were barefoot and clad in summer clothing.

As they gratefully accepted the presents he held out for them, their mother wept and told the man that she had absolutely nothing to give them. The gifts that Project Angel Tree provided were the only presents they would receive that Christmas.

"I'm afraid that is all too common," says Beard, who explains that many families must rely on Project Angel Tree to provide a Christmas for their children. "Each year we automatically include all the families we've sent gifts to in previous years, and send forms asking them to list the ages and 'wishes' of their children. One woman, whose husband has been locked up eight years, just wrote me: 'I'd like to say thank you because my children can have Christmas for the third straight year. For the other five years, they didn't have much of anything.'"

Families Are Victims Too

People who respond to Project Angel Tree address a need that has been neglected in the past. Crime victims are not only the people who have been hurt; family members of convicted criminals also suffer. Charles Colson, who founded Prison Fellowship in 1976 after serving time in a federal penitentiary for his role in the Watergate conspiracy, says,



Last year, 61 projects provided gifts for more than 10,000 children. This Christmas, volunteers hope to set up 200 trees and help 30,000 children.

"For thousands of children, Christmas trees and gifts are nonexistent if Daddy is in prison and Mom is on welfare or working two jobs."

At least one volunteer has seen firsthand how much this ministry touches these parents. "I shall never forget the experience I had. A prisoner with his two children came by to see the angel tree. He told me he was on a three-day pass, but would soon be up for parole. He wanted his children to see where their gifts came from last year. He called the workers 'angels.'"

Colson adds, "The gifts provided by the community have proven a tangible means by which thousands of children—truly 'the least of these'—know that the birth of the Christ-child is real, for they see His love through those who reach out and give." □



Brent Bolds is a pastor with Gulf Coast Covenant Church, Mobile, Alabama, where he heads the church's ministry to the poor and to prisoners. He holds a bachelor of religious education degree from William Tyndale College in Southfield, Michigan, and has ministered in Canada, New Zealand, and throughout the United States. Brent and his wife, Rosemarie, have three children and live in Mobile.

For More Information

If you would like more information on participating in or sponsoring an angel tree project, write Alan S. Chambers, Project Angel Tree Coordinator, Prison Fellowship, P.O. Box 17500, Washington, D.C. 20041-0500, or call (703) 478-0010.

A NETWORK

Charles Green shares how leaders, some once



***I**t is a privilege to commend Charles Green to our readership. Brother Charles has pastored Word of Faith Temple in New Orleans for the last thirty-two years. Word of Faith has a membership of approximately twenty-five hundred and reaches far beyond New Orleans through television and other ministries. This pastor has carried a burden beyond his own ministry for the body of Christ and especially other Christian leaders.*

The following interview will describe his efforts and those of others to bring Christians together in spiritual unity.

—Charles Simpson

New Wine: Would you tell us briefly about the organization you're chairman of, the Network of Christian Ministries?

Charles Green: The Network of Christian Ministries started in July 1983 when John Gimenez, pastor of Rock Church, Virginia Beach, Virginia, Emanuele Cannistraci, pastor of Evangel Christian Fellowship, San Jose, California, and I began to feel that something positive should be done to reach across barriers and join the different facets of the body of Christ. We realized we could just float along in our own circles, having an inward desire for fellowship and for a greater coming together of the body of Christ, yet doing nothing about it. We felt, however, that if something constructive was going to be done to bring unity to

FOR UNITY

opposed to each other, are coming together.

pass, we had to take action.

It became apparent to us that many people were not aligned with either the historic denominational world, the well-known Pentecostal organizations and denominations, or the stronger parts of the charismatic renewal. These believers did not want to be isolated, but they did not know how to reach out.

So we agreed that if we would sound a trumpet, letting people know that we had a desire for unity, we would find others who felt the same way. As we prayerfully considered what could be done and as we began talking to others about it, one by one we brought together a group of people who had a kindred spirit with us about doing something about unity. We had our first meeting in Chicago later that year. Our first national conference was held this past July in Denver.

NW: How many members do you have now, and what are their affiliations? Do you have a broad spectrum represented?

CG: At present, more than four hundred ministers are participating, many of whom are involved on behalf of their fellowships, so we are already representing exciting numbers. We're planning another large meeting of the general membership next July, and expect at least a thousand people at the meeting.

From the beginning, our desire has not been to compete with local church authority or denomina-

tional authority. We feel strongly that the Network should not be an ordaining body. Wherever people are ordained—in their local church or fellowship, regional fellowship, or full-fledged denomination—that is where their loyalty should remain. We have not wanted to send any signal that we are creating something that would compete with other groups.

As a result, people from a wide variety of streams have gotten involved: leaders from covenant churches, from the discipleship movement, from full gospel organizations, and from older denominations. These are the founding members of the Network: Charles Blair, Calvary Temple, Denver, Colorado; Roderick Caesar, Sr., Bethel Gospel Tabernacle, Hollis, New York; Emanuele Cannistraci; Mel Davis, Bible Fellowship, British Columbia, Canada; John Gimenez; Dick Iverson, Bible Temple, Portland, Oregon; John Meares, Evangel Temple, Washington, D.C.; Paul E. Paino, Calvary Temple Church, Fort Wayne, Indiana; Thomas Reid, Full Gospel Tabernacle, Orchard Park, New York; David Schoch, Bethany Chapel, Long Beach, California; Ken Sumrall, Liberty Church, Pensacola, Florida; Bob Weiner, Jr., Maranatha Christian Churches, Gainesville, Florida; and myself.

NW: Even when there is a lot of talk about unity, it doesn't necessarily happen when people from different streams meet together. Was there a spirit of unity at the

Denver conference?

CG: Definitely. We did not do any national advertising of the meeting in Denver; it was more or less word of mouth and personal invitation. Yet there were so many different groups represented. What we saw there was incredible: people from different backgrounds flowing together with the spirit of love, communion, and fellowship, and pledging love to one another. These were people from strong denominations and people who had taken a non-denominational stance; people from the discipleship groups and covenant churches, and the so-called faith groups. There was such a marvelous difference of backgrounds, and yet from the very beginning, we saw them flowing together with love and commitment to one another.

We all entered into a time of repentance—crying to the Lord God and to each other with concern over the divisions of the past. We had trust and confidence in each other when it was all over, and prayed that we would become even closer in the days ahead. The spirit of the meeting left us stunned.

NW: Were you expecting such a strong commitment?

CG: We had hoped it would happen, but we had purposely not asked anyone for that sort of commitment because we wanted folks to feel free to come together for an exchange and just hear

what we had to say. We did not want to build any fences that would hinder them from wanting to come. When we saw what happened at the meeting, we were overjoyed.

The spirit was infectious. People such as your own Charles Simpson and Bob Mumford, and others such as Ken Copeland had a beautiful spirit as they reached out. I think it inspired many others. Before it was over, everyone reached out—everyone.

The last night we had a meeting with Ken Copeland and John Gimenez. It started at seven and ended at eleven, but the spirit continued. I saw people in the hotel lobby and hallways until two in the morning reaching out to each other in love, people with tears in their eyes, confessing their need and their desire to come together in love and fellowship. It was fantastic.

Since the meeting, I have received some of the most outstanding letters from these people of various groups. It's mind boggling to see what is happening so quickly.

NW: Do you think that the humbling and repentance were necessary first steps for the Network to continue on and to meet your goals and purposes in the future?

CG: I say yes with this qualification: I have always felt that every time we take a new step in God—whether it involves other people or a fresh commitment to our own ministry or a renewal of our intensity toward God—that step is taken on the foundation of repentance in our own lives. It is not that we're repudiating our past history, fellowships, efforts, or doctrines. I want to stress that strongly. Rather, the foundational step of repentance is saying that we have discovered we can do better. And to that extent, we repent or turn from the



Ken Copeland opens a Network of Christian Ministries meeting. From left are Barbara and Charles Green, Copeland, John and Anne Gimenez, and Ken Sumrall.

power of the commitment of the past, and say, "I believe I can do better."

We're still building upon the old, thanking God for every good thing that we've had, but we recognize that with the help and fellowship of other brothers and sisters in Christ, we can do better. That's the general tone of what we felt at that meeting. It was simply saying, "I'm so sorry for anything that's caused our separation, and I'm reaching out to you with new love and new compassion. I'm saying I need you, and I cannot sufficiently grow in the Body without you."

NW: Are you soliciting new members now?

CG: Yes, we're inviting people who feel that the Spirit-led life is what they want, and who want to be involved in fellowship—not just talking about fellowship, but meeting together at different times during the year. That includes not only local pastors, but evangelists and those who are involved in the various educational

realms: Bible colleges and other institutes of learning. Membership is open to anyone who is compatible with the aims of the Network. We certainly invite them to contact us and express their desire to become a part.

NW: Did you find when you started telling people about your vision for unity that they had the same hopes and desires to see something get started?

CG: Certainly. The Bible says that originally there were set times when God said He would favor Zion. We believe this is one of those times, and it became apparent to us almost immediately—the moment we began to tell people what was in our hearts, they would get so excited. Over and over again, we heard that God had been speaking the same message to their hearts in exactly the same way.

NW: Many times the individual church members get word that leaders are meeting together, and it sounds fine to them on a theo-

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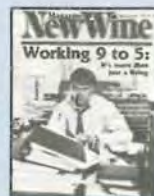
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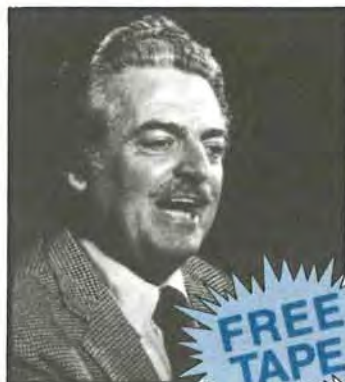
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Members of Network worship during its first national conference held last July in Denver. More than four hundred ministers are involved with Network.

retical level. But when it comes down to making it practical, problems occur. How do you convince an individual who disagrees vehemently with someone's doctrine—even to the point of not considering him a Christian—that the time has come to tear down fences and build bridges?

CG: I can answer that from two perspectives. In the last thirty-five years of my ministry, I have come 180 degrees in my thinking. At one time I considered myself a personal, private warrior who had to "defend the faith," and I lashed out at everyone who didn't believe just exactly as I did. Then, I went to the opposite extreme and enthusiastically embraced anyone who just talked about Jesus and carried a Bible—without any investigation at all.

Then, one day, it began to dawn on me that somewhere between those two extremes was a balance. There was a place where I had to be zealous for the faith; but at the same time, there was a place where I had to reach out in

love. This effort on my part—I can't speak for others—is the waving of a flag to all my friends around the world, saying, "I don't want to fight you. I don't want to be harsh anymore. I want to reach out with compassion and love."

At the same time, I'm saying I might not enthusiastically and quickly take up all your crusades or instantly believe all your doctrines or quickly be able to say amen to everything you're doing. But I want to get close so that we can stand near each other and reach out to each other without any animosity. I feel that once we do that, we'll overcome some of what has separated us.

As long as we stay far away and have nothing to do with someone because of something he said or stood for or believed, or because of someone he fellowshiped with, there's no hope. But when we come together, there is hope.

Pharaoh gave the decree that all the boy babies would be killed, and obviously his daughter knew of that decree. From all that we

can tell, she had no problem with it as long as she could remain aloof from all those babies, seeing them as "things" and nonentities. But the moment she got close to one, looked into his eyes, and saw him as an individual, the decree was something she couldn't agree with. The only difference between saying amen to the mass murder that was going on and wanting to save the baby was distance.

If we can get close to people, we won't want to be separated from them anymore. If I can hear Charles Simpson's voice break when he talks about loving me and the other members of the body of Christ; if I can hear Bob Mumford weep over the fellowship he wants; if I can hear Ken Copeland say, "I submit myself to you, and I'm so sorry that we've been separated"; if I can hear John Gimenez and all the others humble themselves; and if I can have a chance myself to look at these people and hold their hands and look into their eyes, and say, "I need you," we've bridged the distance. To me, that is what this unity is all about.

NW: When you returned to your own church, how did you share that spirit with it?

CG: When I got home, I began to preach with a cry in my heart to our people, asking them to continue to follow me with confidence as they had been doing. There was an instant reception. I don't think the problem with unity is so much with the rank and file of the fellowship. I think that division, if I spoke in percentages, would be ninety percent with the leaders and only ten percent with the people who follow us. When we get our act together, I don't think it's going to be very difficult to get the people to follow. I think this will fulfil the cry that many of them have had. □



Papa Panov's Special Christmas

A time-treasured tale to help children of all ages celebrate the coming of the Messiah

BY LEO TOLSTOY

It was Christmas Eve and although it was still afternoon, lights had begun to appear in the shops and houses of the little Russian village, for the short winter day was nearly over. Excited children scurried indoors and now only muffled sounds of chatter and laughter escaped from closed shutters.

Old Papa Panov, the village shoemaker, stepped outside his shop to take one last look around. The sounds of happiness, the bright lights and the faint but delicious smells of Christmas cooking reminded him of past Christmas times when his wife had been alive and his own children little. Now they had gone. His usually cheerful face, with the little laughter wrinkles behind the round steel spectacles, looked sad now. But he went back indoors with a firm step, put up the shutters and set a pot of coffee to heat on the charcoal stove. Then, with a sigh, he settled in his big armchair.

Papa Panov did not often read, but tonight he pulled down the big old family Bible and, slowly tracing the lines with one forefinger, he read again the Christmas story. He read how Mary and Joseph, tired by their journey to Bethlehem, found no room for them at the inn, so that Mary's little baby was born in the cowshed.

"Oh dear, oh dear!" exclaimed Papa Panov, "If only they had come here! I would have given them my bed and I could have covered the baby with my patchwork quilt to keep him warm."

He read on about the wise men who had come to see the baby Jesus, bringing him splendid gifts. Papa Panov's face fell.

"I have no gift that I could give him," he thought sadly.

Then his face brightened. He put down the Bible, got up and stretched his long arms to the shelf high up in his little room. He took down a

small, dusty box and opened it. Inside was a perfect pair of tiny leather shoes. Papa Panov smiled with satisfaction. Yes, they were as good as he had remembered—the best shoes he had ever made.

"I should give him those," he decided, as he gently put them away and sat down again.

He was feeling tired now, and the further he read the sleepier he became. The print began to dance before his eyes so that he closed them, just for a moment. In no time at all Papa Panov was fast asleep.

And as he slept he dreamed. He dreamed that someone was in his room and he knew at once, as one does in dreams, who the person was. It was Jesus.

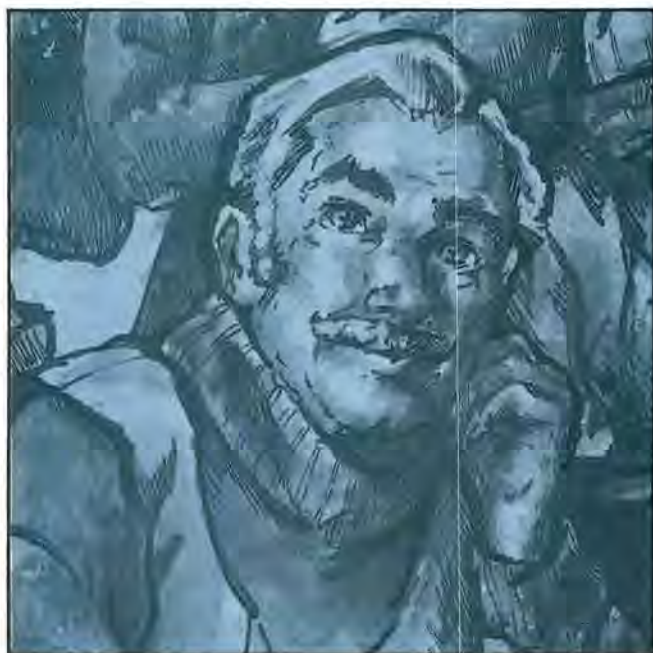
"You have been wishing that you could see me, Papa Panov," he said kindly, "then look for me tomorrow. It will be Christmas Day and I will visit you. But look carefully, for I shall not tell you who I am."

When at last Papa Panov awoke, the bells were ringing out and a thin light was filtering through the shutters.

"Bless my soul!" said Papa Panov. "It's Christmas Day!"

He stood up and stretched himself, for he was rather stiff. Then his face filled with happiness as he remembered his dream. This would be a very special Christmas after all, for Jesus was coming to visit him. How would he look? Would he be a little baby, as at that first Christmas? Would he be a grown man, a carpenter—or the great King that he is, God's Son? He must watch carefully the whole day through so that he recognized him however he came.

Papa Panov put on a special pot of coffee for his Christmas breakfast, took down the shutters and looked out of the window. The street was



deserted, no one was stirring yet. No one except the road sweeper. He looked as miserable and dirty as ever, and well he might! Whoever wanted to work on Christmas Day—and in the raw cold and bitter freezing mist of such a morning?

Papa Panov opened the shop door, letting in a thin stream of cold air. "Come in!" he shouted across the street cheerily. "Come and have some hot coffee to keep out the cold!"

The sweeper looked up, scarcely able to believe his ears. He was only too glad to put down his broom and come into the warm room. His old clothes steamed gently in the heat of the stove and he clasped both red hands round the comforting warm mug as he drank.

Papa Panov watched him with satisfaction, but every now and then his eyes strayed to the window. It would never do to miss his special visitor.

"Expecting someone?" the sweeper asked at last. So Papa Panov told him about his dream. "Well, I hope he comes," the sweeper said, "you've given me a bit of Christmas cheer I never expected to have. I'd say you deserve to have your dream come true." And he actually smiled.

When he had gone, Papa Panov put on cabbage soup for his dinner, then went to the door again, scanning the street. He saw no one. But he was mistaken. Someone *was* coming.

The girl walked so slowly and quietly, hugging

the walls of shops and houses, that it was a while before he noticed her. She looked very tired and she was carrying something. As she drew nearer he could see that it was a baby, wrapped in a thin shawl. There was such sadness in her face and in the pinched little face of the baby, that Papa Panov's heart went out to them.

"Won't you come in?" he called, stepping outside to meet them, "you both need to warm by the fire and rest."

The young mother let him shepherd her indoors and to the comfort of the armchair. She gave a sigh of relief.

"I'll warm some milk for the baby," Papa Panov said, "I've had children of my own—I can feed her for you." He took the milk from the stove and carefully fed the baby from a spoon, warming her tiny feet by the stove at the same time.

"She needs shoes," the cobbler said.

But the girl replied, "I can't afford shoes, I've got no husband to bring home money. I'm on my way to the next village to get work."

A sudden thought flashed into Papa Panov's mind. He remembered the little shoes he had looked at last night. But he had been keeping those for Jesus. He looked again at the cold little feet and made up his mind.

"Try these on her," he said, handing the baby and the shoes to the mother. The beautiful little shoes were a perfect fit. The girl smiled happily and the baby gurgled with pleasure.

"You have been so kind to us," the girl said, when she got up with her baby to go. "May all your Christmas wishes come true!"

But Papa Panov was beginning to wonder if his very special Christmas wish *would* come true. Perhaps he had missed his visitor? He looked anxiously up and down the street. There were plenty of people about but they were all faces that he recognized. There were neighbors going to call on their families. They nodded and smiled and wished him Happy Christmas! Or beggars—and Papa Panov hurried indoors to fetch them hot soup and a generous hunk of bread, hurrying out again in case he missed the Important Stranger.

All too soon the winter dusk fell. When Papa Panov next went to the door and strained his eyes he could no longer make out the passers-by. Most were home and indoors by now anyway. He walked slowly back into his room at last, put

up the shutters and sat down wearily in his armchair.

So it had been just a dream after all.

Jesus had not come.

Then all at once he knew that he was no longer alone in the room.

This was no dream, for he was wide awake. At first he seemed to see before his eyes the long stream of people who had come to him that day. He saw again the old road sweeper, the young mother and her baby and the beggars he had fed. As they passed, each whispered, "Didn't you see me, Papa Panov?"

"Who are you?" he called out, bewildered.

Then another voice answered him. It was the

voice from his dream—the voice of Jesus.

"I was hungry and you fed me," he said. "I was naked and you clothed me. I was cold and you warmed me. I came to you today in every one of those you helped and welcomed."

Then all was quiet and still. Only the sound of the big clock ticking. A great peace and happiness seemed to fill the room, overflowing Papa Panov's heart until he wanted to burst out singing and laughing and dancing with joy.

"So he *did* come after all!" was all that he said. □

'Papa Panov's Special Christmas' by Leo Tolstoy, retold by Mary Batchelor from Our Family Christmas Book, Abingdon Press, copyright Lion Publishing.

More Than a Novelist

A look at the life of Leo Tolstoy

A Christmas story by Leo Tolstoy?

At first it might seem odd for a Christian magazine to publish a short story written almost a century ago by a member of the Russian nobility, but there is good reason for it. Leo Nikolaevich Tolstoy was more than a novelist who wrote such classics as *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina*. He was also a Christian who is considered by many to have been the "conscience of Russia" in the late nineteenth century.

Tolstoy was raised in a well-to-do family, but for many years he struggled with the meaninglessness and corruption of the society that surrounded him. He was fifty-one years old when his search for reality brought him to a dramatic religious conversion. In his own words: "I came to believe in the doctrine of Christ,

and my whole life underwent a sudden transformation."

Following his conversion, Tolstoy became one of the greatest moral influences in the world. He opposed and exposed the corruption and abuses of his own privileged class, he attacked the abuses and incompetence of the military, and he spearheaded efforts to promote the education of peasant children.

His spiritual transformation also made him increasingly critical of the Orthodox Church. He faulted the obscurity and selectiveness of its doctrines, with its emphasis on rules and its desire, as he saw it, to maintain itself rather than to change society. In 1901, when the church could no longer stand his outspoken tirades against it, he was excommunicated.

Although Tolstoy's beliefs did at times depart from the scriptural norm, without agreeing



with these views, we can see that the Church and the society of his day had serious problems with no easy solutions in sight.

These things are evident: He loved the common people and regarded their way of life as more real and healthy than his own privileged background. He loved children, and wrote many of his short stories specifically for them. He loved social justice, and attacked government abuses. And he loved the Bible, especially the Gospels, whose simplicity he preferred to cumbersome dogma.

Tolstoy died in 1910, but his novels—and his short stories, such as "Papa Panov's Special Christmas"—will live on for many years to come. □



"Soli Deo Gloria"

The music of Johann Sebastian Bach still celebrates the joy of the Christmas season.

BY GLENN BASHAM

Rejoice, be glad! Arise,
praise thy days!
Proclaim abroad what
the most high this day hast
done!
Leave off lamenting, dispel all
weeping,
All join voices in praise and
joy!
Serve the most high with a
glorious choir,
Let us worship the name of the
almighty Lord!

—Opening chorus of Bach's
Christmas Oratorio

For people around the world, the heralding of the Christmas season means the joyous sound of holiday music. It's the time to enjoy such beloved works as Handel's *Messiah*, Tchaikovsky's *Nutcracker Suite*, and especially Johann Sebastian Bach's glorious *Christmas Oratorio*.

Most everyone will agree that Johann Sebastian Bach was one of the world's greatest composers, but few realize that he was also a devout Christian. The most powerful testimony of his Christian faith is found in his

music; whether instrumental or vocal, all of it was composed for the glory of God and as an act of worship. In fact, Bach often inscribed on his title pages, "Soli Deo gloria," or, "To God alone be the glory."

This year, when we commemorate the three-hundredth anniversary of Bach's birth, is a good time to appreciate his music not only as masterpieces that have endured three centuries, but also as modern-day means to worship the Lord.

No Fame or Fortune

In Bach's time, known as the baroque period, there were two kinds of music: popular folk music, found in the German taverns and marketplaces, and "high" art music, written and performed for aristocratic functions and for the Lutheran Church. Musicians in the latter category were usually employed by a royal court, municipal council, opera house, or church. Few composers chose positions with churches because the salaries were so much lower than at better-endowed institutions such as courts or opera houses.

Although Bach, who was employed as an organist by Lutheran churches in what is now East Germany, never achieved fame or fortune, he persisted throughout his lifetime composing and dedicating his music to the glory of

God. At the age of twenty-three he wrote of his "ultimate goal, namely, the cultivation of formal church music, to the glory of God."¹ He also said that "the aim and fundamental reason of all music is none other than to be to the glory of God and the restoration of the spirit."²

He expressed his convictions about music in his joyful and exuberant *Christmas Oratorio*, which he composed in 1734 for use in the Christmastide services of St. Thomas Church in Leipzig. His source for the biblical texts found in the *Christmas Oratorio*, sometimes called Bach's answer to Handel's *Messiah*, were the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, which he presented in a sung narration. The six parts were meant to be performed on six different days throughout the Christmas holidays: the first three days of Christmas (December 25, 26, and 27), the Feast of the Circumcision (January 1), the Sunday after New Year's Day, and the Feast of the Epiphany (January 6).

Among the most popular movements of the oratorio are the moving chorus "Glory to God," the magnificent "Keep, My Heart," and the "Shepherd's Music" symphony.

The final chorale of the *Christmas Oratorio* resounds in a celebration of the joy found in the Christmas season. It is a triumphant affirmation of our ultimate destiny as sons of God:

To God Alone Be the Glory

Three hundred years after Bach, a young musician follows in his footsteps.

Paul Mahder, the enthusiastic manager of the National Christian Symphony Orchestra (NCSO), is working to restore classical music as an instrument to worship God. It all began five years ago with a dramatic vision of a huge orchestra in the round.

In the vision, the orchestra was playing music he had never heard, yet it had a powerful emotional impact. "It was incredibly intense," Mahder explains. "If the music was depicting peace, it was prophesying peace and I felt peace. It imparted to the audience whatever it was playing."

Then, the Lord spoke to him in the vision, saying, "This is the day of worship that I will bring to this country."

Since that time, Mahder has been working to establish the National Christian Symphony Orchestra, which he believes was God's purpose in giving him the vision. "I think that God wants to reveal Himself to people—believers and unbelievers alike—and He wants to touch our lives with His presence," he says.

An accomplished pianist who received symphony management training through the American

Symphonic League, Mahder points out that music is the chief vehicle for cultural communication in our society. "If the gospel is to be presented effectively, we must rise to the challenge of communicating it in powerful musical terms."

The Church used to set society's standards for music by commissioning work from composers such as Bach, Handel, and Beethoven. "Now the funding for classical music comes from governmental agencies, such as the National Endowment for the Humanities, and from corporations, such as Mobil Oil. As the financial support for music has shifted from spiritual to secular, its purpose has drifted from worship to entertainment."

Mahder hopes that the NCSO will be the catalyst for returning music to the Church. He sees the orchestra performing quality music, as well as ministering to its audience after each concert and working with local worship leaders in classes and seminars. Plans for the symphony call for auditions by spring of 1986, and the first concert on Palm Sunday 1987.

One of Mahder's favorite



scriptures is Zephaniah 3:17: "The Lord your God is in your midst, a victorious warrior. He will exult over you with joy" (NAS).

"The Greek word for joy," he explains, "literally means 'jumping up and down'! Joy is in the Lord's heart, and He wants His people to have joy in their hearts too." □

For more information on the National Christian Symphony Orchestra, write to NCSO, 8945 Old LeMay Ferry Road, Hillsboro, Missouri 63050, or call (314) 789-3901.

Now are ye well avenged upon
your enemies,
For Christ hath broken asunder
All the might of the Adversary.
Death, Devil, Sin and Hell
Are vanquished now forever;
In its rightful place, by God's
side,
Now stands the Human Race. □

Footnotes

¹Hans T. David and Arthur Mendel,

ed., *The Bach Reader* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1972), p. 60.

²Ibid. p. 35.

Glenn Basham, a violinist, has been a member of the Miami Philharmonic, the Detroit Symphony Orchestra, and the Renaissance Chamber Orchestra, and has toured as a soloist in Germany and Italy. He is music director of New Covenant Christian Church in East Lansing, Michigan, where he, his wife, Leelo, and their son live.





Ninety

A man reminisces on wishes, dreams,
BY LIONEL

Lionel Whiston has experienced more than ninety Christmases in his lifetime, and each year the meaning of the holiday has become clearer and more meaningful to him. Here he looks back at the different stages of his understanding of Christmas, showing how it has matured into something special.

I Got


Time was when my first thought at Christmas was, What am I going to get? I remember looking in closets, in drawers, and in cubbyholes, trying to see if a gift for me was hidden there. Weeks before Christmas, my pals were all asking, "What are you going to get?" But we were poor. I didn't get much: an orange, a few nuts, some hard candy, clothes, gloves, and a game of Parcheesi.

I Saw

The stores were filled with toys and attractive gifts. We flattened our noses against the plate glass windows of the candy store. My friend Tom told me to look in the bicycle store—he was going to get that shiny red one! His father had said so. Bill, another friend, hoped for skates and a sled. I knew it couldn't be anything like that for me.

I Wished

Oh, how I wished and how I envied! Why weren't my folks rich enough to get expensive toys, such as a bike, a cricket bat (I lived in England during my boyhood), or a hockey stick? One boy I knew actually got a billiard table of his very own! I wished, I dreamed, and I envied.



Christmases

and lessons of Christmases past.
WHISTON

I Did

Side by side with wishing and getting were happenings. We went caroling and were invited into homes to enjoy mince pies and cider. I was a shepherd in a church pageant one year, a wise man the next year, and later, wonderful to tell, I was Joseph!

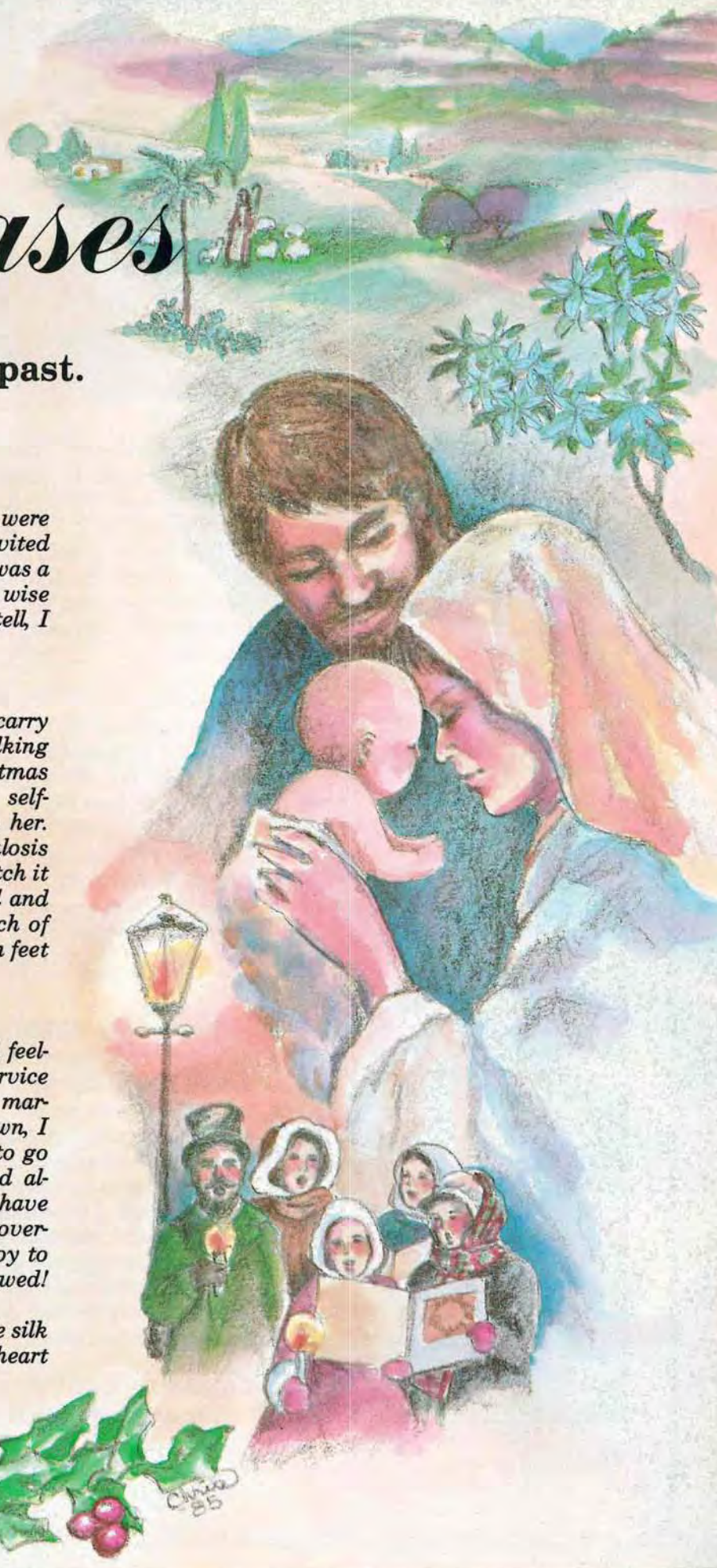
I Gave

We took time from holiday pleasures to carry presents to the shut-ins. I remember walking several miles to bring some simple Christmas goodies to a bedridden woman. I was self-conscious, wondering what I would say to her. She had consumption (as they called tuberculosis in those days) and I wondered if I would catch it if I shook hands with her. But she laughed and told me stories, and I can still feel the touch of her hands as she blessed me. I left feeling ten feet tall.

I Felt

The act of giving brought with it a good feeling. I started to experience the joys of service and caring love. In the early years of my marriage, while I pastored in a small college town, I met a Japanese student who had nowhere to go for the Christmas holidays. Christmas had always been a family day when we could not have an outsider present, but the desire to bless overcame tradition and we invited this lonely boy to share our holiday. What gratitude he showed! What interest!

In a burst of intimacy he pulled out a little silk American flag that he always wore near his heart





Dick Iverson on coming together

Next Month in New Wine: Beginnings

Dick Iverson gives five keys to help God's people move together in this season of fresh starts, and shares the exciting results Scripture promises when we do become one in Christ.

Charles Simpson and three other well-known Christian leaders—Kenneth Copeland, John Gimenez, and John Wimber—share what God has in store for them in this new year.

Charles Swindoll explains that if we've been loners, we might want to start over by joining others on the journey. The key to surviving in our culture of "ragged-edge reality," he says, is that "one plus one equals survival."

Plus the sobering testimony of a young man caught up in the demonic world of punk rock music.

All in the January *New Wine*



and proudly said, "This is my country now. I love America. No matter what Japan does, I will never take part in a war against the United States." The year was 1924, and the press was carrying articles about the "Yellow Peril."

Our hearts overflowed that Christmas night. In caring, we had come closer to the God who cared. Christmas is "not what we give, but what we share, for the gift without the giver is bare; who gives himself with his alms feeds three, himself, his hungering neighbor, and me."¹

I Knew

Slowly, year by year the story of Bethlehem took on deeper meaning. I knew the story from the Gospel of Luke by heart. I pictured it in my mind again and again—Mary, Joseph, the babe in the manger, and the shepherds. And then I added the wise men of Matthew's Gospel to complete the scene. The spirit of Christmas was slowly invading my being and changing my life-style. I began to realize that Jesus' coming was not just something that had happened in Bethlehem two thousand years ago: He was coming to me in the here and now to be my friend. Jesus really was not born for me until He was born in my heart.

I Remember

Today, after more than ninety Christmases, I remember; I recollect. This business of recollecting the past is what makes old age so choice—the best of all the ages of man. I see again the little boy standing in front of the fireplace wondering how Santa could keep his suit so dazzling white and shiny red as he climbed down that sooty chimney!

I recall eyes dancing with joy as presents, even though meager, were opened. I also relive those quieter moments when the only light was the warm glow of the fire. I hear the carols. I see again shadows dancing on the ceiling, reflecting the Christmas tree. I remember as a boy sneaking down after midnight to see what was under the tree for me, and as a man sneaking down to place some added surprises there for loved ones.

I Rejoice

The words and music of the carols have become more and more



meaningful with the passing years: "Word of the Father now in flesh appearing"; "Joy to the world! The Lord is come"; "Tidings of comfort and joy"; "Cast out our sin and enter in"; "O come to us, abide with us, our Lord Emmanuel"; "With the angels let us sing, alleluia." They all join in symphonic grandeur, proclaiming, "God so loved the world that He gave His Son." As I sing, these words written years ago suddenly come alive. They live in my heart. They are mine.

I Celebrate

As a moon shining over a lake—God's gift to everyone—suddenly becomes my moon when its reflections make a straight path to my feet, so God's Son—given to everyone—suddenly becomes God's gift to me. Ancient words burn their way into my inmost being. They are changed and personalized for me. "God so loved Lionel Whiston that He gave His only Son that Lionel Whiston should not perish but have everlasting life. For God sent His Son to Lionel Whiston, not to condemn him, but that Lionel Whiston might be saved through Him."

I celebrate the birth of my Savior, but as I celebrate with others, He becomes our Savior. I must first know this for myself, and then I can share the joy with others and together we can sing in triumphant chorus.

What first was God's Christmas gift has become my Christmas, and now it is our Christmas. As we sing the carols and adore Him, He is with us again just as He was two thousand years ago. □

Footnote

¹James Russell Lowell, "The Vision of Sir Launfal," *The Poetical of James Russell Lowell*, ed. Marjorie Kaufman (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1978), pp. 110-111.



Lionel Whiston has served in the pastoral ministry for more than fifty years. He has written several books, including *Enjoy the Journey* and *For Those in Love*. He and his wife, Irma, live in South Portland, Maine.

Did You Know?

Did you know that *New Wine* is a magazine made up of three key ingredients: inspiration, creativity, and practical application?

Our goal at *New Wine* has always been to share with you what the Holy Spirit is saying (inspiration) in a way that motivates you and holds your attention (creativity), and that enables you to be a better Christian (practical application).

To achieve this goal, each month we review the current issue and ask, Did we give full expression to what God was saying? Did we communicate it clearly and creatively to our readers? Did we strive for excellence? Did everything we do come from the inspiration of the Holy Spirit?

To be only inspirational or creative or practical is not enough. We think a delicate balance of the three and a complete dependence on the Holy Spirit to achieve that makes a good magazine.

It's our goal to continue bringing you God's current word in a fresh, Spirit-filled manner. That's the reason we're here, and we thought you'd like to know. □

How we can give quality gifts at Christmas

A Time for Dad to Be Generous

BY BRUCE LONGSTRETH

At Christmastime, our thoughts naturally turn to giving. In our generous mood, we want to bestow on loved ones, particularly our children, the biggest presents we can find. But are the biggest the best?

The answer is found in the word *generosity*, which comes from a Latin root meaning "of noble birth." Generosity is the ability of a nobleman to convey a lasting blessing with everything he gives. The focus of generosity is on the quality of the giver, not the quantity of the gift.

According to our definition, the best gifts we can give our children are not measured by their size. The "noble" father may buy his son a bike, skates, or a train set, but more importantly, he also spends time watching and helping as his son learns how to use and enjoy his gift. The time spent and the care shown mean more than the material gift itself.

Generosity also means that a noble father not only gives quality gifts to his children, but to his neighbors as well. He offers to fix the washing machine for the wid-

ow next door, and donates food to the elderly couple down the street. He visits the sick and plays with the neighborhood children.

On the other hand, generosity does not mean that a father gives out of demand or duty, for that is a trait of an ignoble man, who rarely shows any love or care in his giving. The ignoble man's child is usually spoiled, because he gives him what he wants when he wants it. Rather than being remembered by his child as a man who gave of himself to his family and others, his legacy is that of a clumsy, bungling, manipulated man who never imparted any lasting qualities or values.

Three important traits of the nobleman will help us as fathers to give generously to our children.

1. *Nobility of birth.* The nobleman has a history and a heritage. He never tries to make up for the lack in his past by giving excessively. He believes that his past—good or bad—has given him many important values that he is responsible to pass on. The values he shares with others will secure a happy and successful

future for them.

2. *Nobility of desire.* Believing that he possesses good qualities, the nobleman desires to pass on to others the best of what he has. He never considers his values old-fashioned or not "with it." They are too valuable to keep to himself and too precious to disregard.

3. *Nobility of action.* The nobleman takes time to plan the best way of acting upon his desire to express his greatest values.

Christmastime is not a time to "go for broke" on a frantic buying spree; rather it is a great opportunity to express our values to others in the gifts that we give them.

The best gifts are those that increase the time we spend with our children. Rather than saying, "Go play with your toys," these gifts say, "Let's work on this together." One of my family's favorite gifts, for example, is a giant jigsaw puzzle. Each year, it takes the efforts of Mom and Dad and both the kids to complete it.

We can make generosity the focus of our Christmas giving in many different ways, but the most important thing is for our children to recall that we as fathers gave ourselves in everything we gave. The generous dad has that ability, and he will be remembered by his children as a noble father. □

Bruce Longstreth is editor of *New Wine and Fathergram*.

"Tips for Fathers" is provided by *Fathergram*, a monthly newsletter that offers insights, tips, and testimonials from fathers who care about their families. To subscribe, send \$9.95 (special price) to *Fathergram*, P.O. Box Z, Mobile, AL 36616.

Finding joy in Christmas was a struggle

"A Present I'll Never Forget"

BY JENNIFER BEEBEE

I sat in the hospital waiting room and stared at the Christmas decorations. Obviously someone had tried to spruce up the dull surroundings with a few lights and some holly, but they did nothing to lift my spirits.

Christmas just wasn't the same this year.

The whole season had lost its sparkle and excitement. It was the first Christmas that I could remember not looking forward to all the presents, parties, and other festivities.

I had just gone through the toughest time of my life. A few months earlier, my natural father had been killed in a car accident. I didn't think I could take another tragedy, but there was no choice. While I was still trying to cope with my father's death, I received the news of my stepfather's cancer. He spent all of the holiday season in the hospital.

My life was like a nightmare that I was hoping to wake up from. There didn't seem to be any hope in sight, and I lost all enthusiasm for what was usually my favorite time of year. I had always eagerly anticipated Christmas, and my birthday, which follows a few weeks after. But Christmas came and went with no change in my outlook, and when my birthday arrived, I was convinced it wouldn't be any better. The Lord, however, had other

plans.

The morning of my birthday I dreaded getting out of bed to face the day. Although I usually enjoyed my job as a customer service representative for Integrity Communications, this particular morning I would have rather stayed in bed and just forgotten about my birthday. But slowly I got up and got ready for work. When I arrived at the office, I was overwhelmed at what I saw; my desk was covered with cards, presents, and a big bouquet of pink carnations! I knew it would be a lot easier to get through the day knowing how much my friends cared for me and understood what I was going through.

As I sat at my desk to begin the day's work, I noticed a letter from Tanzania, Africa, postmarked just before Christmas. Every day I received lots of letters from people all over the world who subscribe to *New Wine* and our other publications—people I had never met but had written to at one time or another for the ministry. I liked reading all those letters, but this one was particularly special:

Dear Jennifer,

"Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for He has visited and redeemed His people" (Luke 1:68). These words prophesied shortly before the birth of Jesus reveal the purpose for



Through a letter from a stranger, Jennifer Beebe saw God's goodness.

His coming to earth....He came to redeem His people. Thank God we have been redeemed from the curse of the Law.

At this Christmas season, I want to remind you of one of the names given to Jesus: Immanuel, which means "God with us." No matter what problems or situations we may face, we can rest in the assurance that He is very near, and that help, comfort, and strength are as close as the mention of His name.

May my God bless you all,
Samson Lochti

Some people might say it was only a coincidence that this letter arrived all the way from Africa on the morning of my birthday—a day when I needed the message that it contained very much. But I knew the Lord in this unique way was reassuring me of His love in the midst of a difficult season. It's one birthday present I'll never forget. □

Jennifer Beebe, a former customer service representative for Integrity Communications, lives in Tulsa, Oklahoma, where she attends Oral Roberts University.

Must we be "busy" to spend time profitably?

A Wise Investment

BY DON BASHAM

Our age is characterized by a preoccupation with saving time. Yet no matter how much time we save, no one seems to have enough. The truth is, time can't be saved. It can only be spent, and how we spend it makes all the difference.

In his book *Walden*, Henry David Thoreau wrote, "Time is but the stream I go a-fishing in." Significantly, his book, a classic in American literature, is a product of two years he "squandered," living at the edge of Walden Pond, frittering away his time meditating and daydreaming, recording thoughts that have changed and enriched millions of lives for more than a hundred and fifty years. Of course, he could have spent those years working hard at something the world considers useful, such as making money.

King David also spent much of his time in a useless activity. The shepherd king was not only a mighty warrior but also a poet and daydreamer who wasted days and weeks obeying his God, who said, "Be still, and know that I am God" (Ps. 46:10 NIV). If he hadn't, we wouldn't have the Book of Psalms.

Must we be "busy" to spend time profitably? Christians seem to think so. Some years ago, a major magazine conducted a survey of forty thousand church members that showed that the average church member expected his pastor to spend eighty-four hours a week at his job.

During my years as a denomi-

national pastor I often felt that kind of pressure. But I thank God He gave me the courage to keep my priorities straight and not to sacrifice my wife and children on the altar of my "ministerial career."

Recently, while going through some old files, I found a copy of a December 1961 church newsletter, written while I was a pastor in Toronto, Canada. It expressed the struggle I had in taking an hour of a busy day to spend with my son. I quote:

The other day I came home to find our four-year-old son fascinated by the snow. As I put on my coat to return to work after lunch, he put on his coat and boots to go outside and build a snowman.

Now, grown-ups are too busy to build a snowman. Everyone knows that, even my son. So he didn't ask for my help, and maybe that's why I decided to help him build one.

It was a terribly inefficient and undignified way for a minister to behave right in broad daylight. I could have spent the time more profitably doing something else. For most people, that's what time is for—to make a profit.

But I'm not sure that my time with my son was time wasted. I believe I made a deposit in a different kind of bank; and the memory of my son's laughter and his shiny-eyed wonder as Jolly Jim the Snowman took shape bears me out. The

world's a better place. My son's a better boy, and I'm a better man because of Jolly Jim, even though he didn't live too long.

In the late afternoon, I returned home to find that some schoolboy, whose parents had already convinced him that the world has no time or place for a snowman, had come along and knocked Jolly Jim's head off. He hadn't had time to build a snowman. He only had time to wreck one. But for my son and me, the memory of our time together in building Jolly Jim remains intact; no one can tear that down.

That newsletter was written twenty-four years ago. Today, my son is grown and married and has a son of his own. I'm justly proud of the man he has become.

Looking back, I know I had my priorities straight that December day. Some people driving past the parsonage may have thought they saw a busy minister neglecting his duties as he helped his four-year-old son build a snowman at noon. But what they really saw was a man busily engaged in the most noble task that God ever assigned; they saw a father *taking time to build his son*.

Do we need to save more time? No, we need more people to invest their time in ways that will bear fruit in future generations. At least, that's the way I see it. □



Don Basham is chief editorial consultant for New Wine.

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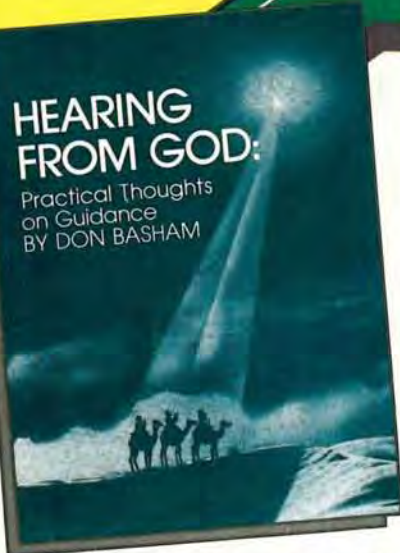
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