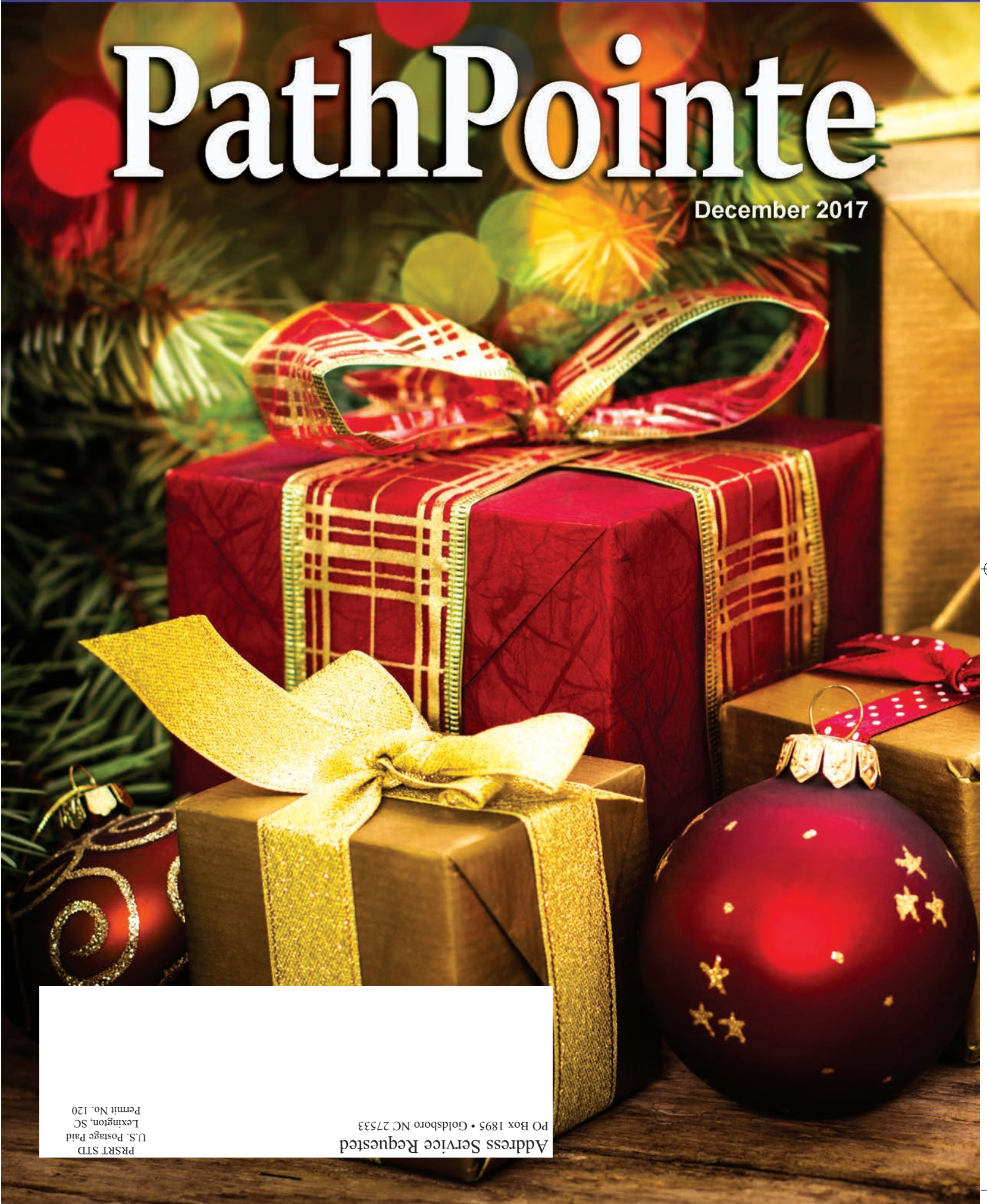


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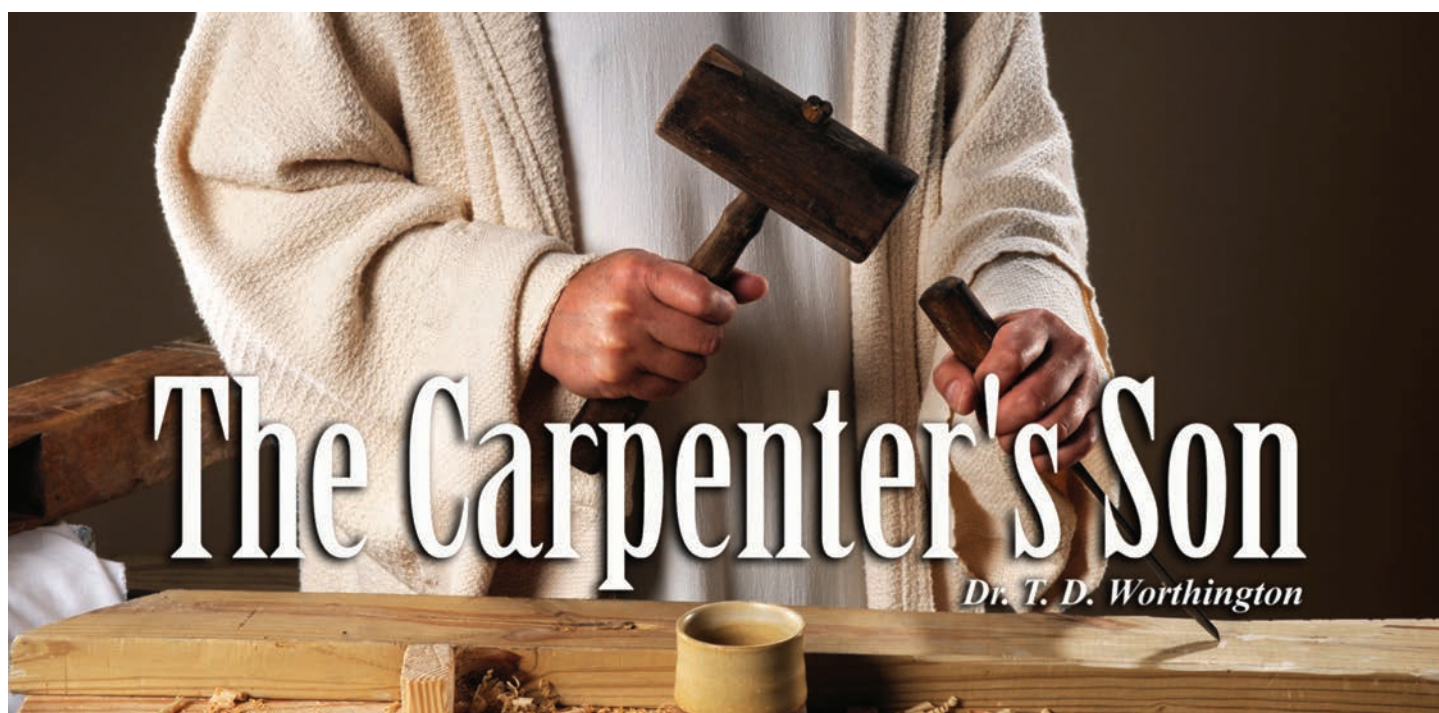
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My name is Joseph, and I wonder if you know my son? His name is Jesus. Oh, I know He is not technically or biologically my son. I know He is the Son of God. I also know He had a relationship with God the Father from eternity past—long before I knew Him—and it continues to this day. But, long before He was known as the Son of God, in our little town He was known as the Carpenter's Son... *my son!* I loved Him as a son, treated Him like a son, and taught Him like a son. Furthermore, Jesus respected me and honored me as His father.

Just as our Heavenly Father was well pleased with Jesus, so was I. I took my responsibility as a father seriously, not just to feed Him and care for Him, but also to teach Him a skill. Now, you might think that was a waste of time. We both knew His main mission in life was not to have a career as a carpenter, yet still He was obedient and willing to learn—and I would have failed in my responsibility as a father if I had not taught Him. You see, Jesus was a part of a family, and when you are a part of a family certain expectations are made and responsibilities are required.

He was expected to participate in the family business. Actually, His early training in the carpentry shop greatly influenced His teachings later in life.

Back in my day, boys often began their formal apprenticeship around 12 years old. They usually learned a trade from their father. Training stretched over many years. Like a good student and obedient child, Jesus put forth intense effort to develop the necessary skills to become a master carpenter. I fondly recall the many pleasant hours I spent with Jesus—working with Him, conversing with Him, and passing on my expertise to Him. Some of the things my father taught me, I would end up teaching Him. Oh, how I watched with pride as Jesus mastered the craft!

Carpentry is not an easy job. Knowledge, strength, skill, and a lot of common sense are required to be a good carpenter. It is not as simple as it looks. A carpenter needs to know the characteristics of the wood he works with. We could choose from locally grown timber, such as cypress, oak, cedar, sycamore, and olive. However,

we could not just visit a lumber yard or a building supply store and pick up lumber cut to our specifications. Rather, we would travel to the forest, select the appropriate trees, fell them, and then haul the heavy logs back to the workshop. As I got older more of this heavy work fell on Jesus—and later on His younger brothers.

What might a carpenter produce from the lumber we gathered? Sometimes we would spend many hours outdoors helping to build houses. Although many houses were built of stone, and most all except the houses of the foolish would at least have a rock foundation, we would still need to mill rafters for the roof, manufacture stairs for the interior, and make doors, windows, and frames for the walls.

A carpenter would also produce furniture. We would build things like chairs, stools, tables, cabinets, and cradles. Not all of these items were of simple design. Depending on the budget of the buyer, we might inlay the item with differing types and colors of wood. We might use our skills to carve intricate patterns and designs

in the wood. To protect and beautify the items, we might coat them with beeswax or oil.

A carpenter also made products for the local farmers. We would make yokes, forks, rakes, and shovels. We might fashion plows strong enough for their iron points to gouge furrows through the rocky soil. On occasion we made wooden carts and wagons and crafted the solid or spoked wheels upon which those vehicles rode. Occasionally, we might also labor repairing and maintaining the furniture, tools, and vehicles we made. Sometimes, there was emergency work to be done. I remember once when a farmer came to our shop with a broken plow. It was in prime planting season and the plow had to be fixed to plant the seed. I asked the fellow what caused the plow to be broken. He explained that he just turned aside for a moment—took his eye of the plow for a second—and the plow hit a big rock in the field and splintered. The farmer said that no man was worthy to be called a plowman if he couldn't keep his eyes on the plow. I remember the impression that made on Jesus as he was given the responsibility of repairing that plow.

There were other times when carts had to be repaired for the short harvest season, before the rains began to fall. Sometimes there were late nights in the carpentry shop. Mary would sometimes bring us a late night snack as we labored to finish a job by the deadline.

I saw my son grow into manhood in the carpentry shop. His skin was bronzed by the Middle Eastern sun, His muscles strengthened by years of physical labor, and His hands hardened from gripping rough wood and wielding axes, hammers, and

saws. He was strong. He also had an eye for good craftsmanship. Every joint had to be fitly joined together.

His Personal Toolbox

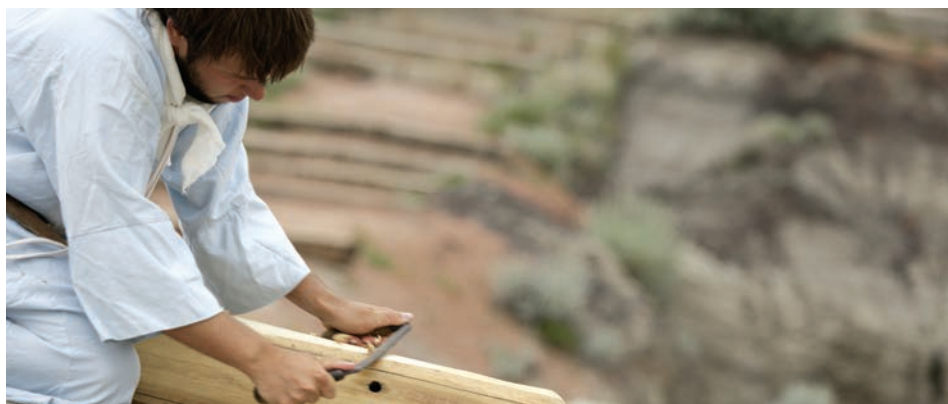
A first-century carpenter would need to know how to handle the tools of His trade. We had some common tools that both Jesus and I would use, but soon I began to purchase tools exclusively for Him. First I made Him a little toolbox and fashioned Him a small hammer. Later, He acquired some serious tools. I got Him a saw, consisting of a wooden frame holding an iron blade with teeth set in a way that would cut on the pull stroke. He would use a square to lay out His work and a plumb to line up vertical surfaces. Also in His toolbox was a level, a rule stick, a plane with its sharp, adjustable iron blade for smoothing rough lumber, and an ax for cutting down trees. He also had a lathe and gouge used for cutting and shaping spindles. He had a wooden mallet used for pounding dowels into joints or for driving chisels. He had a drawknife and a bow drill.

He Used Many of My Teachings in His Ministry

Now, we all know the influence of His Heavenly Father—and I take nothing away from that. But, I am also quite proud of the influence I had on His life. Jesus would later masterfully use simple, familiar objects to teach deep

spiritual truths. Personally, I think He drew on his background as a carpenter for some of His greatest illustrations. I remember when He was still quite young He got a speck of sawdust in His eye. It obviously hurt, so I sat Him down on a beam, Mary went to fetch some water, and we washed the speck out of His eye. I explained that this was one of the hazards of the trade, but at least it was just a speck—I reminded Him as I *tapped the beam He was sitting on*—that it could be a lot worse. Mary didn't appreciate my humor, but Jesus smiled and agreed. Later, He would give this very example: ***“Why, beholdest thou the mote (speck) that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?” (Matthew 7:3)***

As a carpenter, He knew how massive a beam was. Later, Jesus said to another group: ***“No man having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.” (Luke 9:62)*** I think He recalled the numerous broken plows He repaired; sometimes broken by carelessness. One of Jesus' warmest invitations involved a piece of equipment manufactured by a carpenter. ***“Take my yoke upon you and learn of me,” said Jesus. “My yoke is easy and my burden is light.” (Matthew 11:29, 30)*** I taught Jesus how to properly make a yoke. I explained that the yoke must be made to fit the oxen. It must be measured to



fit the animal and designed depending on the burden he was to bear. Jesus knew how to make a yoke that did not chafe but was well-fitted to the animal—so as to make his burden light.

Is Not This the Carpenter's Son?

Now, I am proud to be a carpenter. It is an honorable profession. However, when Jesus' enemies referred to Him as ***"The Carpenter's Son"*** they meant it as an insult. They are asking disdainfully, ***"Who does He think He is?"*** Is He not a common worker with His hands even as the rest of us are? Even more, we hear the opinions of rulers, religious authorities, crowds, disciples, and even family members; ***"Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary..."*** (Mark 6:3) They were asking could a child of such an undistinguished heritage be such a powerful prophet—much less the Messiah.

The additional phrase ***"the son of Mary"*** was also most hurtful and disparaging. It was contrary to Jewish usage to describe a man as the son of his mother, even when she was a widow. People were normally referred to as the son of their father. It was their way of implying He was illegitimate. Rumors to that effect were always surfacing—every time we thought they had died down—they came back up again. The townspeople are scandalized by the human origins of Jesus, whom they know as a carpenter.

He Was Known As a Carpenter

However, that does bring me to one great point. It was a proud moment for me. It somewhat validated my training as a father when Jesus became a carpenter in His own right. ***"Is not this the carpenter"***, is actually a question in Greek that expects a positive reply. He was known as a

"craftsman" (*tekton*). He learned the skills I taught Him well enough to be considered a carpenter in His own right. When Jesus visited His hometown of Nazareth, He is actually called a carpenter by the local residents. In the normal course of events, Jesus became a carpenter Himself and lived for a while in fulfillment of that role. Later, He merged the roles of His Heavenly Father and earthly father together and became the greatest builder since the Creation.

In **Matthew 16:18** Jesus makes a promise that involves the greatest building project ever undertaken. In response to Peter's confession that He was the Christ, the Son of the living God, Jesus declares, ***"On this rock I will build My church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."***

The Scriptures go on to reveal that Jesus fulfilled His promise to build a church. He purchased the material from which His church was built. In speaking to those who made up the church in the city of Corinth, Paul assures them that the foundation upon which they were established is none other than Jesus. Jesus built the promised church. He alone became the architect, builder, owner, and Lord.

Some wonderful details of the church that Jesus built are provided in **Ephesians 2:19-22**. ***"Now therefore ye are no more foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone. In whom all the building fitly framed together..."***

Notice how various points about the house that Christ constructed are made

through the carefully chosen language of the passage.

The word *"foreigners"* originally meant something like *"alongside the house"* in the sense of *"separated from or away from the main house,"* almost like an outbuilding. But now, Paul points out that the Gentiles are now an integral part of the household of God. It is an accomplished fact that the Gentiles are in Christ, as their place in it is spoken of in the past tense with the word built. Paul says that the whole building will grow into a holy temple in the Lord, emphasizing the living aspect of the building.

Jesus, my Son—the son of a lowly carpenter from Nazareth thus becomes a great builder. He has built a living and continuing house that we can all benefit from and become a part of. Do you know Him?

As a father, when I see the influence I had over Jesus when He was growing up, I stand amazed. Knowing He was the Son of God, and here on a divine mission, I sometimes wondered if I was wasting my time—and *His time*—teaching Him how to fashion a piece of lumber. But, I was not wasting time. Jesus used the things I taught Him. They became a lasting influence over His life and He used those lessons to help others. And, even if He had not used my lessons, I still had a responsibility to teach Him. After all, that's what fathers do.

(Originally written as a 2017 Father's Day message.)



Dr. Worthington has been in the ministry over forty years and serves as President of Pathway Ministries.

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Keeping Christmas Special

Mrs. Amber Sherman

All I wanted, all everyone wanted, was to make their Christmas special. But what happened was far worse. What had we done?

My husband and I kept it simple with our boys for Christmas. The budget demanded it, but more so, we did not want our boys to look at Christmas as being about them. So we explained how Christmas was so special we celebrated all month Jesus coming to us. His birth was so very, very precious. They asked if we had any presents for Jesus. We explained how Jesus actually gave us presents on His birthday, that He loved us that much. We told how Jesus had enabled mommy and daddy to buy them some presents and the presents were from Jesus, Daddy and Mommy.

Our boys received one special toy, and then some other needed items, like clothes, crayons, coloring books, mittens and toothbrushes. We did get a few small items for

their stocking like snowmen for the window, fruit gummies, and some colorful toothbrushes. I'm a bit embarrassed to tell you so specifically what we got them, but I am doing so because of how special their reaction was. They loved their one toy. The clothes were kind of boring. But the mittens were exciting because we got them in case it snowed, and we could build a snowman. The gummies and window snowmen were a hit, and the toothbrushes were a cause for great excitement. Later they wanted to brush their teeth before it was time. Wow, I was humbled. We had an hour before we needed to leave for meeting more family for Christmas, so we let the boys play with their one toy until then. They played separately and contentedly, none trying to take from each other, each inspecting what his toy could do. The helicopters made noise and flashed lights, and that was fascinating to them. My heart was content, so glad it all seemed well. My husband and I were sad

we couldn't do more for them, but it occurred to me it was all they needed.

My dismay grew as the family gatherings did. We went to the next house, and amazingly, everyone assumed someone else was going to get them toys so they each bought clothes for the boys. Now for a mom, this is exciting. For a kid, they kept wondering where another helicopter was. I felt saddened that the boys were disappointed, and I realized they wouldn't be expecting a toy if we hadn't given them one. Perhaps we should have waited to give it to them?

As we went to another event the next day, the boys received clothes and more toys. Now, I don't mind the boys receiving toys. It is the effect it had at home later that made me realize Christmas now had a "me" meaning to the boys instead of Jesus and others. They each received a big toy and a few smaller ones. Some were individual toys, and some

were for all three boys to share. I smiled as I saw their excitement and happiness over their gifts.

The dismay came the next day when they were able to play with their toys. The individual toys had to be labeled with each child's name, and they were told they could not mess with the toys that were not theirs. This helped if a toy got broken, they knew it was by their own hand. It also established ownership and not open field. The toys which were a group gift became a battleground and had to be clarified over and over they were for all of them to share and did not belong to one child. I believe in teaching my children to share, but also respecting their brother's property and staying away from it. Many of these boundaries are necessary for peace in the home. The boys were not content to play with their own toys. They all wanted the most recent and biggest toy.

We had another Christmas celebration with family from out of town a couple of days later. They received more clothes, and yes, more toys. I again smiled over their enthusiasm. How could I not? What's not to smile about? I am so grateful for the love of others for my children. The fact that they would spend their money and time on them is a great gift. Perhaps that is one of the most special gifts of Christmas, yet we often fail to see it. I can remember having to "grow up" and not look at Christmas as what I might get. We were not spoiled by most standards. It was just that we got more than we did at any other time of year. My parents tried to get us what we wanted, but they also balanced it with what we needed. Needs come first, and so many of us forget that.



Everything seemed fine until the next day, again. I would have thought with so many new toys they would have been the most content boys you ever met. But the more they got, the more dissatisfied they became. Oh, they played with the toys, but the newest one was the chosen one...by all three boys. The previous days' favored toy lay discarded on the floor. Bickering and fighting over it had to be taken care of, turns had to be timed and enforced with the "one" toy, and basic chaos was the norm. The floor was littered, and my day was spent making them clean up, take turns, not take, and not yell when another messed up their toy. Disobedience often ensued when it was time to share, and discipline would have to take effect.

Wasn't it so much better when they were excited over a toothbrush and one helicopter each? And none of them had talked about Christmas being about Jesus even once since they starting getting their toys. What had we really taught them about Christmas? Oh my, oh my. What were we to do? Could the damage be undone? Would

repeating this each year cause them to lose "Christ" out of Christmas for good in their life?

America is a blessed nation, though we are losing her slowly. As Christians, shouldn't our responsibility be to raise a generation who really keeps Christ, the Best Gift, at the center of our celebrations? Although we may be losing our country's blessing with each passing year, could it be that our working hard to keep it simple might slow up the losses even a little? Some of the most grateful and responsible people in the world tell of hard and lean times shaping them into who they are. I do not wish hardship or poverty upon anyone, but there's a lesson to be learned there. Christ came and gave Himself to us. That was the greatest gift ever given. May we give ourselves to Him and to others, giving a gift far beyond what any material item can equal. That is how Christmas will remain special.



Mrs. Amber Sherman is a homemaker and mother of four. She and her husband reside in Snow Hill, NC.

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Merry Christmas

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We love Christmas around here at **GoMix Christian Radio!** If you haven't tuned-in yet, be sure to listen



on any of our 8 frequencies for the *Sounds of Christmas* all day long as we *Celebrate the Gift* of Jesus Christ. Traveling out of the listening area? That's not a problem! You can also listen on-line at www.gomixradio.org, or you can listen on your smartphone through the free **TuneIn** app.

As this year will soon be coming to a close, we look back with a heart of thankfulness. We have the best listeners and supporters in the world, and you are the ones that help to make this ministry possible. Our words fall extremely short as we try to express our gratitude for all you have done this past year through your time, prayers, encouragement, and financial support. Thank you, **Faith Partners and Business**

Underwriters, for being our co-laborers together for Christ!

From all of us here at **GoMix Christian Radio** and **Pathway Ministries**, we wish you and your family a safe, happy, and Christ-filled Holiday Season. **Merry Christmas!**

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A Great Gift!

Christmas is a season of gifts, both giving and receiving. The average person will spend \$950 on Christmas Gifts. If you are spending the majority of your annual gift allowance during this season, maybe we should look at the criteria the Lord used in giving His gift to us. After all, that was the gift that started this whole thing called Christmas.

First, IT WAS A WELL PLANNED GIFT. Have you ever searched for a gift for someone and found they were all sold out? You think: "I should have bought this gift earlier." Sometimes, you can make the mistake of getting a gift too early, especially for kids. You buy them a Superman shirt in August because he's their hero, but by December they are into Spiderman and wouldn't be caught dead in a Superman shirt. The gift of Jesus came at the perfect time (Galatians 4:4). That's the way the Bible explains it.

Second, IT WAS A PRACTICAL GIFT. I could buy my wife a power saw. It might be the best one they make with the deluxe carrying case and extra blades. It would be a nice gift, but not very practical. It is really not what she needs. The Lord gave us exactly what we needed. We were lost and needed salvation, and that is exactly what He provided through the gift of Christ.

Third, IT WAS EXACTLY THE RIGHT SIZE. We have all given or received gifts that didn't fit. Although the giver had great intentions, it might fit a lot of people, but his gift was just not the right size for us. God's gift is a perfect fit for each of us. The helmet of salvation God gave us many years ago still fits perfectly.

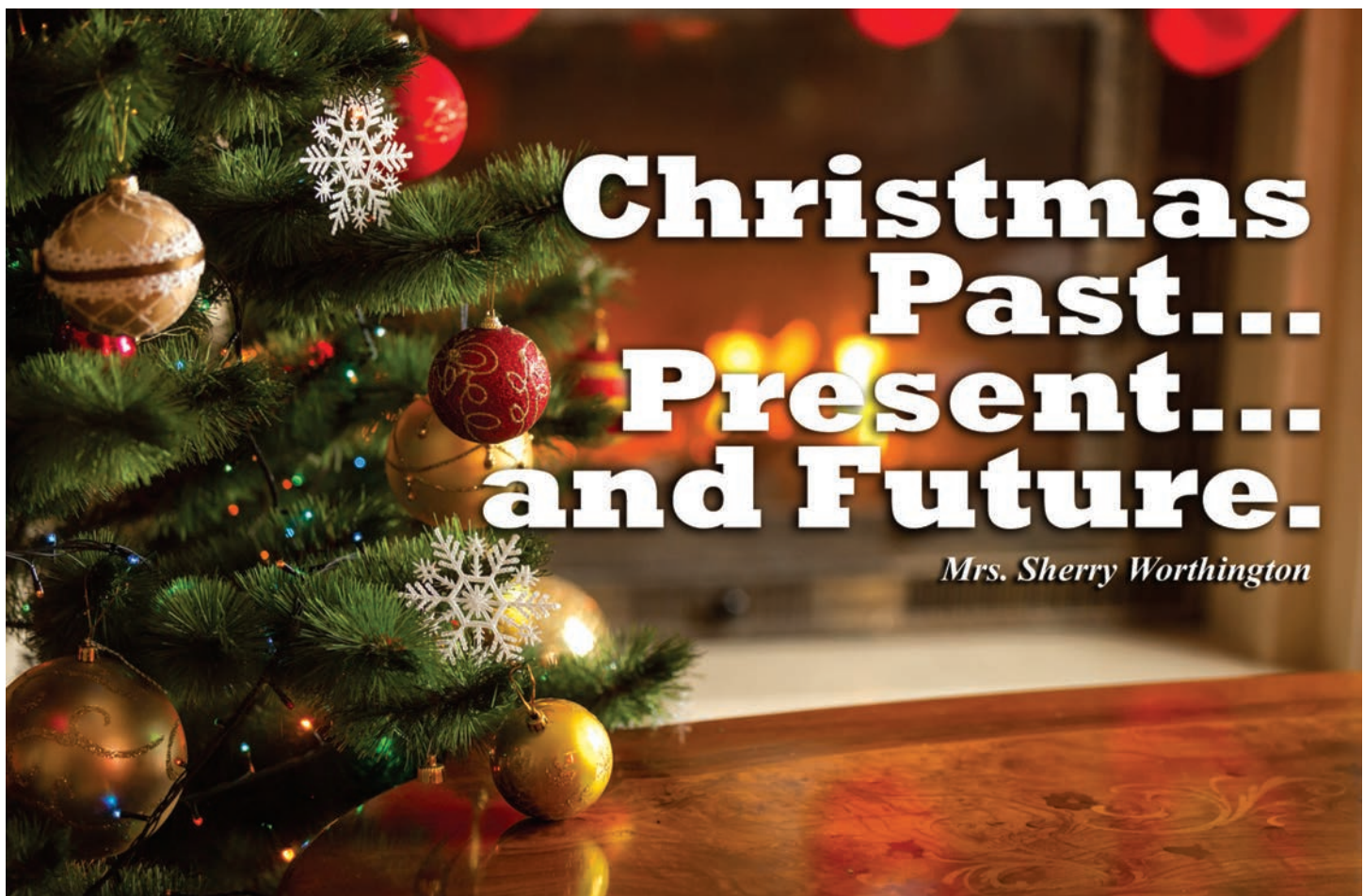
Fourth, IT WAS GIVEN IN LOVE. We don't always get or give gifts because of love. Sometimes they are

given out of obligation. However, it is always best when you can give out of love. That's what God did. He had no obligation to save us, but He did because of His love. (I John 4:9)

Fifth, IT IS ALWAYS NICE IF YOU CAN RETURN THE GIFT. Although you may not be able to take God's gift back, you certainly have the option to refuse it. Tragically, some people won't even consider the gift. They are invited to inquire about Christ. They receive some prodding by the Holy Spirit, but they just pass it off. Yes, you have a free will in the matter.

Finally, GIFTS CAN BE SPECIAL SIMPLY BECAUSE OF WHO GAVE IT. When my grandfather retired, he didn't have a lot of money, but he always got me a gift for Christmas. Knowing the budgetary restraints he was under, it made his gift a little more special. When my children were small, they would also give me little gifts. These gifts were special. Gifts can be inexpensive, or they may cost a great deal. Either way, their value is always greater when given sacrificially by someone who loves you. The first Christmas gift came from God. He was the one who gave the gift. Have you received His gift, the greatest gift ever given?

One final thought. If I were to give you a bushel of oranges for Christmas, you might be grateful, but you might also realize you really don't need the whole bushel. So you might immediately start thinking of others you might share with. This is not because you didn't like my gift, but simply because it made sense to share it. You may even tell them who gave it to you. The gift of God is the same way. This is a wonderful season to share.



Christmas Past... Present... and Future.

Mrs. Sherry Worthington

My husband and I love the Christmas movies. We really enjoy most of the Hallmark movies. They are clean, have a wholesome story line, and usually have a moral at the end of the story. We end up recording them so we can watch them at a more convenient time. We are still trying to watch the ones from last season. We also enjoy most of the Christmas classics, but the one we snuggle up to and watch on Christmas Eve is the black and white version of *A Christmas Carol* with Alastair Sim.

As I watch this movie, my mind goes back in time to my Christmas past. Do you remember the tinsel trees made of aluminum? That is the first Christmas tree I remember. We had the little color wheel that went around and made the tree different colors. I remember seeing a picture of me and my new bicycle with training wheels

in front of the tree. Christmas was always special in my home.

As a young child I always looked forward to Christmas. It wasn't just for the presents; it was just a wonderful time of year. The special music at our church was so exciting. We usually had plays as well as Christmas parties. I always loved the Christmas carols, and some secular ones, too. As soon as I was able, I started buying little gifts for my family members. Sometimes I made them, and sometimes it was a fifty cent item at the store. I remember being so excited for my family to open the gifts I had given them. Of course they were always very excited to get the pack of gum or the little heart I had made them. I guess I learned at an early age how much joy giving brings. My parents were faithful to teach my brothers and me the meaning of Christmas. They

taught us Jesus' birthday is the reason we celebrate and we show His love by giving to others.

My husband and I have so many Christmas memories. We don't need a ghost to help us remember. Christmas has always been very special around this house, too. Although gift giving isn't the major focus, it is a nice aspect that we enjoy. We always gave our children something for Christmas, but their gifts were meager compared to their friends. Don't get me wrong, they were excited to get them. Christmas and birthday were the two times of year they received something special, so they were thrilled. We were so excited to give our children a special gift we felt they would enjoy.

We always decorated our home with ornaments, some homemade and others that we have collected over

the years. Our home was built in the late 1800's, so we have high ceilings. The Christmas tree in our living room has always been around twelve feet tall. We used a ladder to get the top and the children each took a section of the tree to decorate. We had it divided into 5 sections using the garland as dividers. We also had a smaller tree in the back of the house that had the homemade ornaments on it along with other memorable ones. The tree was full of memories. With every ornament that was put on the tree, I went back in time. One thing both trees had in common was an abundance of lights! They were always beautiful. We could never have too many lights.

One of my favorite memories with our children is Christmas Eve. We would go to my husband's parents for Christmas Eve and come home to watch a Christmas movie with the children. It wasn't the same movie every year, but it was usually one of the classics. Sometimes a new movie would come out, and we would watch it. But the best part was not the movie; it was that we were all in the room, snuggled up in blankets, watching a movie together. I would look around the room and feel so blessed.

Our traditions have grown as our family has grown. We have more trees in our house, more decorations we have collected over the years, and more responsibilities as well. Our newest addition is a "memory tree" to honor the family members and loved ones that have passed away. It is a small live tree adorned with ornaments that represent something special about each person. My grandfather loved to fish, so we have a fisherman with a huge fish

on the line for him. My husband's grandfather took him to church, so we have a church building for him. This tree has become very special to us as more and more of the people we love pass into eternity.

This Christmas is going to be very interesting. We have eleven grandchildren now so finding a place



to put each stocking is an adventure. Children make Christmas even more exciting. They love to come to Grandma and Granddad's house to see the decorations and the Christmas trees. They started asking in October when we were going to decorate. I also make a lot of Christmas goodies that they enjoy, too! If you think it is dull around here on Christmas, think again. Of course, it is not quiet either!

As my husband and I are getting older, we realize that time is getting shorter. We are so blessed to have our family close, to be able to share the wonder of our Saviour's birth together, and to spread the joy of the season.

When we look into the future, we become saddened at the state of our country and the people that are wandering around aimlessly. I fear for the Christmases of the future. I am concerned for what my grandchildren may have to face. It is already

unsafe to go to the shopping center or anywhere else for that matter. The evil in our streets is proclaimed on the news. Jesus has been kicked out of our schools, our government, and most of our homes. Fortunately, we are still able to go to church and hear God's Word, but when will that be censored? Christmas and Easter are the two special holidays that give us purpose. Without Jesus, these holidays are nothing more than a big party. He is the One that gives us joy!

As most of you know, *A Christmas Carol* is a beautiful story of Mr. Scrooge who had a heart of stone that changed to one that was kind and true by three ghosts reliving his memories of Christmas past, his selfish deeds of Christmas present, and the way he would be remembered in the future. Each ghost shows him how his life has changed over the years and how he affected others. He went from being a kind-hearted young man happy with life to a cruel, greedy, selfish old taskmaster. What ultimately changed him? He came face to face with the future-his future!

This was just a story! However, we must know that only one thing can change us from mean and cruel to kind and true! The only spirit that brings about that kind of change is the Holy Spirit! Get a hold of your future! What is waiting for you on earth and in eternity? Give Jesus your life now, and have the best Christmas ever! Find out what true joy is!

Merry Christmas!



Mrs. Worthington has five children and eleven grandchildren. She serves as Principal of Pathway Christian Academy in Goldsboro.



A Little Bit Like...

Martha

Mrs. Tiffany W. Johnson

I've known about this story for as long as I can remember. Growing up in church, it's just one of those Sunday School lessons taught alongside David and Goliath, Daniel in the Den of Lions, and Jesus Walking on the Water. I'm talking about the story of Mary and Martha found at the end of **Luke 10**. It's just a few verses, but it packs a powerful punch!

You see, Jesus and His disciples were passing through a village when they stopped off at the home of Mary and Martha, who were sisters. So the story goes that Martha was busy about the house, probably cooking and cleaning, while Mary was sitting and talking with Jesus. Of course this bothered Martha, so she went to Jesus complaining that Mary needed to help her with some of the work instead of sitting around and talking. Then Jesus responded,

“Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things. But one thing is needful: and

Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.”

Luke 10:41b, 42

The point of the story is that Mary was spending time with Jesus which was more important than sending her to help cook or clean.

Now it's confession time. It hasn't been that long ago since I was thinking pretty heavily about this story and relating it to my life. I can be a bit of a “clean freak” around my house. I like things the way I like them. I don't like surprises. I want everything planned out in advance, and I don't like last-minute changes. I sound like a fun person, don't I? I'm especially fun (*sarcasm intended*) for my husband and daughter who don't like to plan for anything. They don't notice when the coffee table has been moved 2 inches from where it should be or the wooden spoon is not put back in the right drawer in

the kitchen. *(Yes, sadly I can be that bad sometimes – but I promise I’m working on it!)*

As I was thinking about this story, I began to relate more to Martha. If I had a group of people over at my house, I’d want everything to be perfect. She just wanted to make sure everything was nice for her guests. She wanted them to be comfortable and fed a good meal. She probably wanted her home to be clean and smell nice. Since these were the days long before cell phones or even snail-mail, I’m sure she didn’t have much notice that she was even having guests at her house. Can you imagine having a big group of people over last-minute you hadn’t planned on? My nerves would be tore all to pieces! So there she is running around like crazy, and she looks over and sees her baby sister sitting around talking. I would be a bit aggravated at this point, too.

Although I was relating more to Martha, I was quickly realizing how much she was really missing out on and how much I would be *(and sometimes am)* missing out on, too.

So I’ve been trying to work on myself with the Lord’s help the past few months. What if the trash can is overflowing a little or someone doesn’t put a dish up in the right spot? It’s not the end of the world. Instead of constantly complaining about shoes left in the floor, I am instead thankful for the ones I have in my life that wear those shoes. I’m sure there are widows or others living alone that would love to see such signs of life in their homes. I don’t need to take that for granted.

With Christmas coming up soon, I’ll admit it’s going to be a little hard to push that Martha mentality aside. It’s always such a busy time that goes by way too fast. There’s already a lot on my to-do list, and there probably is on yours, too. Having a list is okay, but don’t let it take over your life. It’s fine to want to pick out “perfect” gifts for those you love, but it’s not more important than just spending time with them. When I think back on loved ones that have passed on,

what would I do if they could come back for just a little while? I wouldn’t care about buying them presents, how clean their house was, or what kind of food we ate... I would just want to spend time with them. If you are blessed to have family this Christmas, enjoy their company! What if they are not here next year?

Likewise, remember the most important Reason for the Season, Jesus Christ! Don’t get so busy celebrating His birthday that you leave Him out. I know you may go to church, you may sing Christmas carols, and you may even put a Nativity scene in your front yard, but don’t get so caught up in everything that you forget to spend that one-on-one time sitting and talking with Him. It is after all His day, you know.

I’ve still got some work to do to be a little more like Mary. If you do too, there’s great news for both of us! Our Heavenly Father is always there, and He’s never too busy for us. And just think, He wants to spend a little more time with us, too! Even now, He’s ready and waiting...



Mrs. Tiffany W. Johnson serves as Editor of PathPointe Magazine. She and her family reside in Snow Hill, N.C. and are members of Pathway Baptist Church in Goldsboro.





Rev. Jason Sherman

With each Christmas season that comes along, my heart is warmed by the memories of Christmas experiences of the past. It is a special feeling that I cannot deny. Sometimes the memories even cause a joyful tear to run down my cheek as the recordings inside my mind of lovely events from Christmases past stream pleasantly on. Christmas is so special to my family for more reasons than one, that's for sure.

To give you a little bit of a background of my life, my mom and dad met and married in Ohio then moved to North Carolina before my sister and I were born. Although we loved our life here in this awesome state, we still greatly missed our loved ones who were tucked away in

a little city on a map 12 hours away. Yep, 700 miles and 12 hours *always* stood between the Sherman Family and our loved ones back in Ohio.

When you couple that unkind reality of distance with our lack of time off (*due to school and my parents' work*), we hardly ever had the opportunity to go see our family. But when we did, boy was it special! Seeing as how us school children only had the summer or Christmas off from school, this pigeon-holed our visits to normally the summer or during the Holidays. Since most months we didn't have the funds to go back to Ohio a lot, we had to choose which time would be most meaningful for our family - The Summer, or Christmastime? If we ever *had* to choose between those

two, normally the Yuletide Season won the vote for our visit up north.

On the day we were to leave, I can still remember the excitement of waking up super early knowing before the day was over, we would be pulling up at the curb of my Grandparents' home. Oh, and I can't forget to tell you how cool the drive was! Even as a little boy, I loved all things car-related. I can remember taking the small trash can my mom gave to my sister and I on each trip (*as a countermeasure for car-sickness*) and I would place my hands at the 10 and 2 position and pretend to drive nearly the whole way there. Sure, there were a few naps and other games along the way, but "pretend driving" was my favorite! All of it was wonderful fun.

Time will not permit to share with you the amazing sights and sounds a very young boy saw as he zoomed through the mountains of North Carolina and Tennessee, past the beautiful plains of Kentucky, then upward into our native state, Ohio. Suffice it to say with every tunnel we drove through that went inside a mountain, or every huge icicle hanging from the side of the cliffs as the natural springs had gushed out and froze, there were many breathtaking scenes for this young child to behold.

But none of that could compare to the utter joy I felt each time we pulled up to my grandparents' houses. Sometimes we went to my Sherman grandparents' home first and at others we went to the Stewart's instead. I didn't care really. Oh, to see those faces I had grown to love so much, yet behold so little – it was a true gift. It didn't matter how much colder it was in Ohio than when we left North Carolina. It didn't matter how many inches of beautiful snow were waiting for us on the ground there, after I received permission from my parents, I bolted out of the car to give the biggest hug I could muster to my precious loved ones.

During each visit we would try to spend as much time with each other as possible, doing nearly everything we could think of. Visits to other, more distant relatives were commonplace, as were trips to the mall to shop for Christmas presents. I even remember my Grandma Sherman once buying me a cookie cake for my birthday. For those not familiar with “cookie cakes,” it's basically the biggest chocolate chip cookie you could imagine – literally as round as a real cake would be,

but flat – decorated with a “Happy Birthday” icing message written on it.

We would also go to the movies, play card games (*ask me sometime about playing “Spoons”*), and have a blast out in the snow with my cousins. One final memory, then I'll get to the heart of the message. My cousin was once given a glow-stick necklace that when you snapped it, it would glow bright yellow for a good while. One night he decided it would be a good idea to take the necklace off (*while it was still*

glowing yellow, mind you) and just start twirling it into a circle by its end in a lasso-like movement. Before long we noticed he didn't have any more “glow-juice” in his necklace. He was a little upset but not tearful. We were more confounded as to what happened to the contents inside his glow necklace. Even the adults couldn't figure it out immediately.

Someone suggested turning out the lights for a moment and when they did, we gazed upon the funniest sight. While my cousin was slinging that glow necklace, he was literally



slinging that “glow goop” all over the living room. When we turned all the lights off, there were glowing streaks on the walls, the furniture, and even on Grandpa Sherman as he was there watching TV while all the slinging was going on. Everyone in the room died laughing and I can remember it didn’t stop for a while. The joke continued because we left the lights off and kept discovering new places that now glowed because of this accidental “glow goop relocation” experiment.

Now...Why am I sharing all this? Because I want us, the adults, to never forget we are making memories for our children and family. These are not just memories, they are *special* memories. These are memories that will make our children and the little loved ones in our families chuckle decades after we’re gone. If you ever want to see a kid living inside an adult’s body, you start asking a grown person about Christmas memories. You’ll see that spark return – I promise.

There’s something very special about Christmas. As a Christian now, I can see it. It’s the special cheer and presence of the Lord lighting upon each family, softening and warming each heart, inviting them to receive the greatest gift ever

given to humanity: The Lord Jesus Christ.

Atheists can adamantly deny it, the Freedom From Religion Foundation can fight against it too, but you will never stop the special warmth, love, and cheer of Christ and Christmas from reaching the human race. God Himself has touched down upon this earth. He has given Himself for this fallen human race. It is at Christmas that we are reminded, by visions of a sweet baby huddled in a manger, that God looks at *every* one of us as precious. He sees each one of us (*yes, even the person you saw in the mirror this morning*) as worthy of sending His Only Son to ultimately die for. Please know that today! God would rather die than you end up in Hell.

For those who have already received His special gift of salvation, there is a bright future ahead that is much more cheerful and amazing than even your best Christmas memories. Although it will be infinitely different, and much more glorious, at its core, this future in Christ will not be much different than the special times of gathering together with our family at Christmas.

God would have you surrender to Him during the wonderful season

of Christmas. It is during this time we celebrate Christ surrendering His will and coming down here to give Himself as a ransom for many. Repent of your rebellion, come at once to place your trust in the Savior, and find what the meaning of life truly is.

Maybe your Christmas memories aren’t as pleasant as mine. It could be this season was a particularly bad time for you in the past. That doesn’t mean you can’t make new memories where Christ and your family are at the center. There’s still time for you to cherish “The Most Wonderful Time Of The Year.” Besides, the eternal future that awaits each Christian is infinitely brighter than any Christmas celebration can ever be. Trust Christ and you will make it there to that Heavenly shore and meet your loved ones again one glorious day.

“For the Son of Man [Jesus] is come to seek and to save that which was lost.”

Luke 19:10



Rev. Sherman serves as an Administrative Assistant at Christian Bible College. He and his family reside in Snow Hill, NC.



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And Finally...



Christmas Traditions...

For the past several years, every Christmas Eve we gather with our 3 children and watch "How the Grinch Stole Christmas".

H. W.

Every Christmas Eve we have what we call a "Jerusalem Dinner". We eat simple foods such as they might have eaten back in Bible times. We eat on the floor by candle light, then Dad reads the Nativity Story out of the New Testament.

W. R.

My husband and I always go out to dinner at a local diner that is open late and then take a drive around town to look at all of the Christmas lights and decorations. We don't go out to dinner much during the year, so it is special when we can do it on Christmas Eve. It is less stressful than cooking a big meal and cleaning up afterward, and I enjoy how we can just spend time together on this special night.

D. F.

On Christmas Eve, our family attends a church service before we ride out to look at Christmas lights. Then we eat cheeseburgers and French fries, read Luke 2, and open one present before going to bed.

H. S.

I hail from a very large family so all holiday occasions are a bit loud and boisterous. On Christmas Eve we all gather at a family member's home. We eat lots of wonderful food, and later we light a bonfire where a bunch of us get together with guitars and sing Christmas carols! We usually allow

one gift to be opened Christmas Eve with my parents. On Christmas Day we let the children wake us up, and we open our gifts. While they are playing with their various toys and gadgets, I cook us all some Christmas morning pancakes.

D. P.

I know it sounds funny that routine can be a tradition, but in our house that's exactly what it is. We always let kids open stockings first, then we have breakfast, then we open gifts from under the tree. After that, we all hang out and play games before visiting with other family. My sisters and I all gather around and watch my parents open their stockings to each other. It's such a sweet display of love to witness, and we've grown to love and respect how well they know each other and the relationship they've built.

L. S.

"Canned Food/American Pie"

We'd like your help for an upcoming edition of "And Finally..."

February is Canned Food Month and American Pie Month! Write to us in 150 words or less and tell us your favorite canning or pie recipes.

The deadline for submission is December 20th, 2017.

You can send an email to: Attn: PathPointe
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