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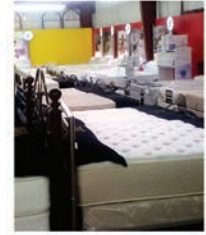
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Nazareth was a little town snuggled in the hills overlooking the Plain of Esdraelon. Most likely it consisted primarily of some small houses, a synagogue probably built on its highest knoll, and a marketplace at the entrance to the village. When the New Testament era dawned, its population was likely around one hundred people, mostly farmers, but also some skilled craftsmen whose shops were found in the marketplace. These tradesmen likely included a potter, a weaver, and a blacksmith. We also are introduced to a carpenter who made his home in Nazareth. Although not recorded for us, some historic events most likely transpired in that humble carpenter shop in Nazareth.

The carpenter himself, a man in the prime of life named Joseph, was engaged to a young girl named Mary, probably still in her teen years. She was a sinner like all the rest of us, but she was highly favored by God. The Lord was with her, and she enjoyed a wonderful moment-by-moment relationship with God.

Yet, in spite of her intimate knowledge of God, it was a shocking and fearful experience when the angel Gabriel appeared to her with a grand announcement (**Luke 1:30-33**). She didn't totally understand the angel's message, so Gabriel explained the supernatural phenomenon that would accomplish this unbelievable feat

(**Luke 1:34-35**). It was a miracle that could only be accomplished by the unlimited power of God, and Elizabeth's miraculous pregnancy was cited by the angel as evidence. Of course, Mary had a free will so the ultimate decision to resist the will of God or to become the willing servant through whom God could carry out His plan was hers to make. Furthermore, this decision is basically a matter of trust. As the story unfolds, we learn several lessons about trust.

*First, we see that Mary had great trust in God.*

*"What a great honor," you might say, "to be chosen as the mother of the*

*Messiah. How could she decline?*” But, let’s give that some thought. You and I can say that because we know the end of the story, but put yourself in Mary’s place for a moment. Do you think anybody would really believe that this child was conceived of the Holy Ghost? Don’t you think that most people would conclude that Mary was covering up a sinful escapade with Joseph? Was there not a possibility that Mary was just trying to avoid being stoned for fornication?

And what about Joseph? He would know that he was not responsible for Mary’s condition. What would he say? Would he still be willing to marry her? Was she willing to give him up if need be? And what about the child? Would not the child carry the stigma of illegitimacy with him throughout his entire life? In that brief moment in the angel’s presence, all of Mary’s hopes and dreams for the future flashed before her mind, and she could see every one of them instantly shattered.

The question boils down to one thing for Mary: ***“Can I trust God to work out every problem I will encounter if I submit myself to His will?”*** Mary had enjoyed a warm personal relationship with her Lord. But now He was asking her to face the greatest question in life for a believer walking in fellowship with Him: ***“Mary, do you trust Me? You will face difficulty and hardship if you follow My will...but will you still trust Me?”***

Mary was a thinking lady, a pondering lady. Twice we are told that she kept certain things and pondered them in her heart (**Luke 2:19, 51**). But she did not take a lot of time to make her decision. She answered immediately (**Luke 1:38**). Her decision was to submit to God’s will and to trust Him

with the consequences. Submission to God’s will almost always involves some risk. But God has promised to work out all the details together for ultimate good. It is apparent that Mary had great trust in God.

***Next, we see that Joseph had great trust in Mary.***

The chronology here is not totally clear. But we might assume after Mary’s return from visiting Elizabeth, the secret could no longer be hidden. Did Mary tell Joseph of the miraculous conception? Did he find her story hard to believe even though he loved her deeply? Or, did he accept it readily? Was his decision to break the engagement because he doubted her word, or was it because he considered himself unworthy to marry the mother of the Messiah? Was he thinking that Mary would have to raise the child in the Temple? Whatever his thoughts, one thing is certain, there was a conflict raging in Joseph’s soul. Fact is, whether ***he believed Mary’s story or not***, others would definitely not believe it, and he would live with gossip about an unfaithful

wife for the rest of his life. And although his heart was breaking, he was leaning toward quietly terminating the relationship and sparing her any public embarrassment. His mind was almost made up; however he was still open to the Lord’s direction. I would imagine he spent hours in quiet meditation regarding the right course of action. Suddenly, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, ***“Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife; for that which has is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost.”***

**Matthew 1:20-21**

Now, the issue was settled. It didn’t matter what the town gossipers would say; Joseph believed! It was probably one of the greatest acts of trust ever exhibited between a man and a woman.

In reality, every marriage is a relationship of trust. When we stand at the altar and listen to our true love promise to forsake all others and cleave to us alone, ***we believe it***. When we hear their solemn promise to love us for better or worse until death parts us, ***we believe it***. And





*because we believe it*, we make the same promises in return and commit ourselves to a lifelong relationship. Trust in each other is a foundation stone in a good marriage, and it must grow as the years pass.

Of course, trust *does* put us at our husband's or wife's mercy. It makes us totally vulnerable, and we can get hurt that way. When we really believe someone and later find out that we have been deceived, it makes us feel foolish and humiliated. ***But what other choice do we have?*** Without trust there can be no relationship. So we ask God for the grace to keep on trusting, and we believe that God will use our trust to make our mate more trustworthy should the need arise.

The angel of God appeared to Joseph two more times, and those

appearances reveal another element of trust in the nativity story...

### ***Finally, we see Mary's great trust in Joseph.***

So, Joseph and Mary had completed the trek to Bethlehem, and the Christchild born in a stable was now history. It would appear the young family settled down in Bethlehem, possibly planning to make it their new home. Nearly two years would pass before the Wise Men arrived from Persia to worship the newborn King.

The Magi unintentionally alerted King Herod to this potential threat to his throne. That was the occasion of another message from an angel of the Lord to Joseph in a dream: ***“Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word; for Herod will***

***seek the young Child to destroy him.”***  
**Matthew 2:13**

While it was still night, Joseph gathered some of his belongings together, took Mary and Jesus, left for Egypt, and remained there until the death of Herod. Something interesting is now beginning to occur. Up to this point, Mary has been the more prominent figure in the Christmas story, yet now, Joseph is the one to whom God gave His instructions. Joseph was the head of his family, and he ***was charged with protecting Jesus from Herod's wrath.*** We might see how Mary might question Joseph's leadership. She could have said, ***“I'm the one God speaks to in this family, and He has not said one word to me about some trip to Egypt.”*** But no, Mary trusted Joseph's leadership.

This was a trip of about two hundred miles over mountains, wilderness, and

desert, with a baby under two years of age. Most mothers can appreciate the degree of inconvenience that involved. I doubt whether Mary really wanted to go. If they had to leave Bethlehem, why not go back home? Why not go back to Nazareth? Wouldn't they be just as safe there? But there is no indication in Scripture that Mary ever questioned Joseph's decision. ***And it happened again.*** After Herod's death, the angel spoke to Joseph in Egypt: ***“Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel; for they are dead which sought the young child's life.”***

**Matthew 2:20**

Again, Joseph obeyed immediately; and again, ***Mary trusted Joseph to do the right thing.***

As we saw in the lives of Abraham and Sarah, submission for a wife means trusting God to work through her husband to do what is best for her. ***And that includes trusting his decisions.*** But that level of trust is not exceptionally difficult when she knows her husband is acting in her best interest and is taking his directions from the Lord, as Joseph was. ***It gets even more complicated.*** It seems their initial plans were to move back to Bethlehem, but again God warned Joseph that Herod's son was reigning in his place. So again God gave him directions, and he returned to Nazareth where Mary's parents lived (**Matthew 2:22-23**). Joseph made his decisions in accord with the will of God. God apparently never told Mary about any of these plans but gave her the understanding to follow her husband.

Men, we have no right to ask our wives to submit to us when we are arbitrarily expressing our own opinions, asserting our own selfish wills, or doing what

is obviously best for us alone. But when we have clear directions from God that are best for all concerned and can share them fully with our wives, then a Godly wife will be able to submit without hesitancy. Men, we have an obligation to lead our families in the path of God's choosing, not our own. We must learn to consult the Lord about every decision, spending time in prayer to seek His wisdom and searching His Word for His principles to guide

us. And if we have an unquestionable desire to do God's will regardless of our own personal preferences, He will protect us from making foolish mistakes that will bring harm to our families.

As our wives see that manifested in our lives, unless they are rebellious, they will be free to follow our leadership with confidence and trust. ***Trust is not an easy and automatic response.*** It needs to be developed, particularly in those who like to do things their own way. But, we can help others build a stronger trust in us by our own deepening commitment to the will of God. When they see that we are yielded to Him, they will find it easier to trust us.

So, what have we seen? We see that both Mary and Joseph trusted God. We also see that Joseph trusted Mary and that Mary trusted Joseph. If you put that all together, it sounds like a pretty good marriage to me.

So, can you think of areas of distrust in your relationship with your spouse?



Perhaps you need to tenderly share them with one another. Have you been guilty of betraying your mate's trust? If so, what can you do to increase or rebuild your trust in each other? Are you ever guilty of expressing your own personal opinions and expecting your wife (or husband) to submit? Have you learned to consult the Lord on every decision? Good marriages are built upon trust; trust that is first placed in God and then placed in each other.

*As we enter this glad Christmas Season, my prayers for each of our loyal Faith Partners and PathPointe readers will be for a joyous and safe Holiday and a prosperous New Year. I sincerely thank you for the opportunity you give me to share these simple messages with you each month. Blessings to you and yours.*



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

# The Greatest Blessing

*Rev. Jason Sherman*



Isn't the Christmas season a powerful reminder of so many wonderful things? One of my favorite activities at Christmastime is to ask people what they enjoy the most about the season. Their answers are always enlightening and diverse.

For some, the best part of Christmastime is listening to the wonderful music. I must agree that's actually one of my favorite parts as well. For others, it's the joy of giving gifts to those we love. I like that too – especially once I became a dad! It is so fun shopping for our children's Christmas presents. It's much more enjoyable than I ever thought it would be.

Another theme that comes up when others talk about enjoying Christmas is that of memories. I'll admit, I think this part is quite special. At no other season of the year am I able to close my eyes and instinctively travel back in time so easily. I

readily see faces and hear voices of cherished loved ones who have not been with us for years.

I believe this matter is really special to me because as a first generation North Carolinian, for many years the only opportunity I had to visit my family back in Ohio (*where my parents were from*) was during the Christmas holidays. In a lot of ways, Christmas takes me down memory lane because it was during this season that a majority of my most cherished family memories took place.

Time would not permit me to share with you the many wonderful "Ohio" stories from my childhood. I'm smiling even now as I think about the shopping trips with Grandma Sherman (*and her buying me a huge cookie cake for my birthday*) or taking a trip to the middle of nowhere on snow-covered highways in order to visit a distant cousin. Of

course, all of this was done while listening to classic Christmas songs in the car. They're the best!

But the one topic I wish to bring to your remembrance, more so than any other enjoyable notion around Christmas, is that of God's precious gift that was sent to us. We are now upon the season of the year where we commemorate God sending the BEST thing that has ever happened to our world... and we know this thing isn't really a "thing" at all, but rather He is a person!

It is not exaggeration to say Jesus Christ is the best gift humanity has EVER received. His arrival marked such a major turning point in God's program that even the angels couldn't contain their excitement as this precious babe arrived in a manger.

Let's take a moment to chat about this peculiar method in which our



Heavenly Father chose to bring His Son, the Saviour, into the world...

Have you ever stopped to consider how much honor God gave to the whole process of motherhood during this special event? He could have chosen literally ANY way to place His Son down here on Earth, but God chose conception, maternity, and childbirth to do it.

As Christians, I don't think this purposeful choice our Heavenly Father made should ever be lost on us. Christ could've just as easily arrived as an adult, a fully grown King, robed in glorious attire, and descending from Heaven to Jerusalem upon a glistening white horse. He could have simply appeared in the temple out of nowhere one day and commanded humanity's worship and obedience.

God could have whipped up the largest hurricane this world has ever seen, filled with thundering and lightning, and then gently opened up the sky for Jesus to step out. Or, God could have used another, more powerful and obvious instance of the "booming voice method" He'd become famous for using before **(Mark 9:7)**.

Still, the most important thing to realize here is God could have chosen ANY way – and yet He decided in His infinite wisdom to choose childbirth.

I find this decision very telling today... especially as we're fighting at this moment against the forces of evil who are trying to destroy humanity's precious babies while they're inside, what's supposed to be, the safest place they could ever be – their mother's womb.

Some might would ask, "*Why are you saying this is a big deal, Brother Jason? I really don't see your point.*"

To answer that, I say the following *(again)*...

God chose to bring the GREATEST gift He's ever given the human race into the world through conception and full-term pregnancy.

It seems God is saying *(rather loudly)* to the world, "*There is not a more perfect way for my Son to come into this world than by a loving mother who tenderly and compassionately cares for Him.*"

Then it's as if He turns and looks at all mothers and says, "*Go, and do likewise!*"

May your Christmas be extremely merry and chocked full of life!

***"And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call His name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest..."***

**Luke 1:31, 32a**

***"And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; ..."***

**Luke 2:7**

***"And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."***

**Luke 2:13-14**

Merry Christmas everyone! May God richly bless you and your families during this very special season of the year!



*Rev. Sherman serves as an Administrative Assistant at Christian Bible College. He and his wife Amber have four children and reside in Snow Hill, NC.*



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## The Perfect Gift

What a great time of year it is! Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Year's Day... there's always so much to look forward to. It's a time when we can see loved ones we haven't seen in a while, enjoy parties with friends, decorate our homes for Jesus' birthday, and reflect on things we're thankful for. It's also a time of shopping and gift giving. Many of us spend hours planning for and seeking out the perfect gift for that someone special. Sometimes that preparation

takes place throughout the entire year as we are always keeping our eyes and ears open for the slightest hints of a possible future gift to give someone.

We search the stores, compare brands, stand in long lines, check the bank account, and weigh out all of our options to make sure we get the perfect present. Frankly put, we give our best for those we love.

Although giving our best should be a priority when it comes to a spouse, child, or parent, we need to be sure we don't leave out the One that gave His best for us. God sent His Son, His only begotten Son, to trade for our wretchedness. He searched Heaven high and low to find the Perfect Gift, Jesus Christ. Jesus chose to come into this sin-cursed world and be subjected to a life of ridicule, loneliness, suffering,

and pain to give us the gift of salvation and a hope for better things to come. He loves us so much!

So, with all of the hustle and bustle of this wonderful season, don't forget to take time out for the Lord. Think on it and pray on it. Seek out opportunities to do something special just for Him this Christmas. After all, He is the reason for the celebration.



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## Shopping With A Personal Touch

Are you one of those early shoppers who already has their gifts wrapped and under the tree? Many of us start out with good intentions to finish up those Christmas lists early, but easily get side tracked and wind up doing some last minute shopping to get ready for the big event. Where do you usually shop for Christmas gifts? Perhaps the holidays will find you at the big discount stores or at the mall. Now days it seems more and more that many are doing their shopping online. After all, you can now order groceries, pet care items, office supplies, clothes, tires, and just about anything else your heart desires from the world of ecommerce.

While all of these provide viable and convenient options, might we suggest Christmas is an excellent time to show your support for our *GoMix Business Underwriters*? In most cases, you will be shopping with friends and fellow-believers in Christ while getting the personal care you just can't get in chain stores or online. You might

even get to hear *GoMix* playing in the background. Talk about a great shopping experience!

So, why don't you begin the search for the perfect gifts in small town shops where the store owners are personally concerned about your satisfaction, while not being ashamed to wish you a "Merry Christmas" as you exit their store? Even better, you will also know your purchases will be helping fellow believers.

Why not choose to shop where your dollar will make a difference and where Christmas shopping can become an enjoyable event again? As you regain your passion for supporting your Christian brothers and sisters, you might actually find there is still some peace and good will left out there after all.

*Merry Christmas and Happy Shopping!*

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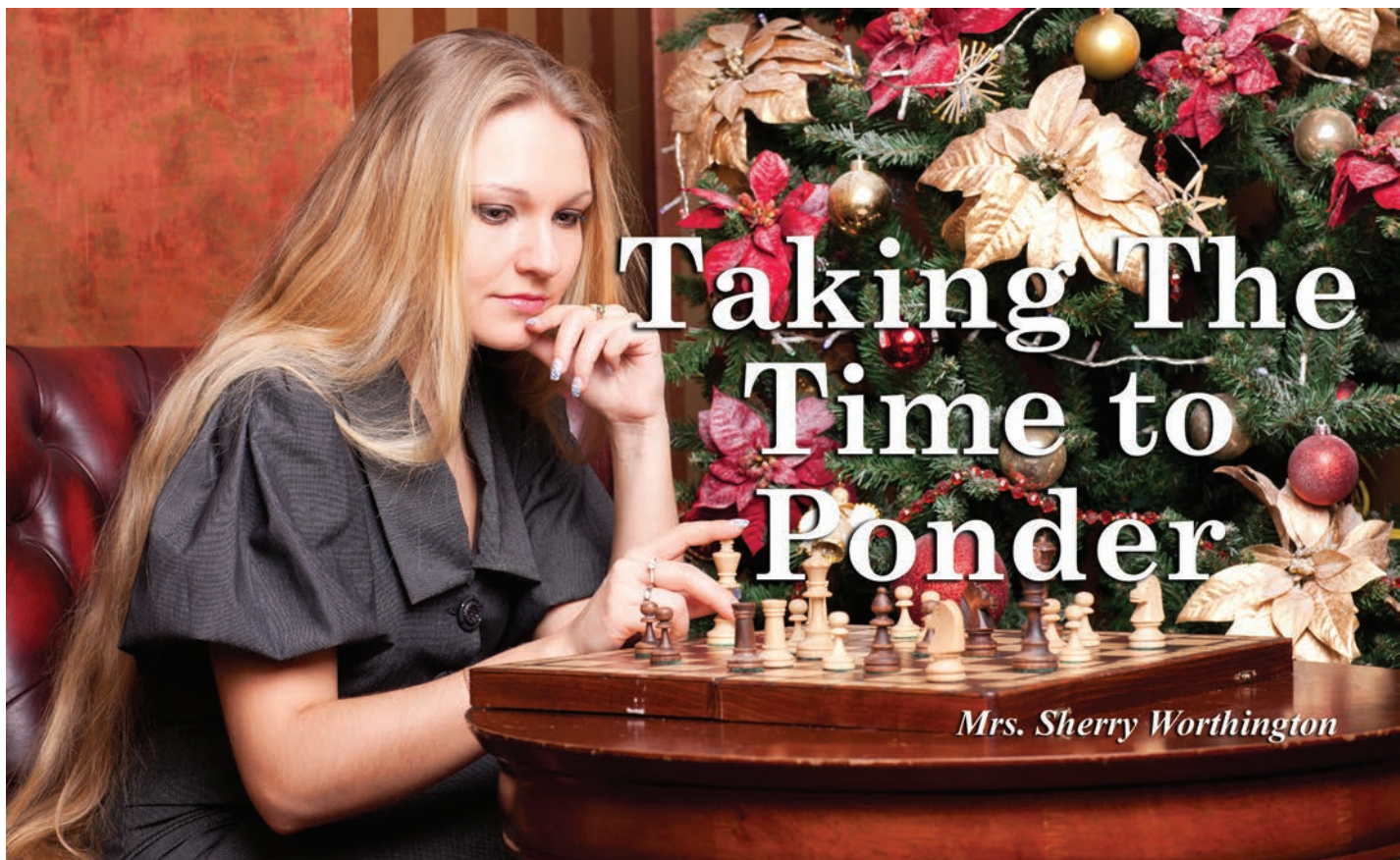
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Whoosh! This year has flown by, and Christmas is just around the corner. I love everything about Christmas, well almost everything. My favorite part is the way that people seem to show more compassion and love. I would like to think it is because the love of Jesus is shining through and they are honoring His birth, but even people who are not saved seem to show love just a little more. They seem to reach out and help those that are in need. Oh, there are always the grumps who spoil the atmosphere, if you let them.

Jesus' birthday is special, and many traditions are associated with the Christmas season. I love the lights, the music, the hymns about our Saviour's birth, the food, and of course, the fellowship around the tree. The only thing I don't like is that it goes too fast. It seems there is so much going on that it is hard to stop and enjoy it. I need to take time to ponder all of God's blessings this Christmas.

Our Christmas season starts with decorating in early November. Then our family takes a trip to Meadow Lights. It's a beautiful place near Benson that honors our Lord with the story of His life using mannequins. It begins with His birth and ends with His resurrection. There is a magnificent candy store and a train ride through ten acres of lights. Next, we have a ministry Christmas party, and the academy has a mission project for the nursing home. The young children learn songs, and we take gifts for the residents. It brightens the day of everyone there, young and old alike. During the season, we sing Christmas hymns at church and enjoy a Christmas program from our young people. We also have a fellowship with lots of Christmas goodies to share. These are three things I enjoy about Christmas wrapped up into one. At the conclusion of the season, we spend time with family celebrating our Saviour's birth and our love for each other.

It just passes by so fast. Even as a child it seemed to pass by fast. I love my husband and would not trade anything about my life, except maybe to slow down. But there are times I would like to go back and visit. I know many people do not have fond memories of their childhood, but I do.

I have always been intrigued with the idea of a time machine. I would like to go back and visit different time periods in my life, especially at Christmas. You know, none of the gifts stand out to me. What stands out is family. I remember being with my parents and my two brothers. Two of them are in Heaven now. My little brother, Scott, was a jokester. He loved to tease me, and I used to get so aggravated with him, but he grew up, and we became close friends. My Dad was my hero and still is. I was always Daddy's little girl. I would love to play ball with him in the back yard or sit on his bed and talk to him again. After I

married, we used to take walks when he came to visit and share our thoughts and dreams.

My grandfather got saved about 4 years before he died. Before he was saved, I was afraid of him. Afterwards, he was a changed man. He became very special to me. My grandmother was also special. She would make the best chocolate cake. I have tried to mimic it. It is close, but it is not quite there. I remember her cooking in the kitchen. After my grandfather passed away, she would cook just for me. Sometimes she would call and ask for a favor promising to cook for me. She didn't have to bribe me to come and help. I would have gladly done anything for her.

It would be grand to sit around and have a family gathering. I remember all of us around the Christmas tree. As a child, I would usually give homemade items, but you would have thought they cost a million bucks. My grandmother was on a fixed income, but she always managed to get us something. Sometimes it was a pack of socks. We always made a big deal of her gifts because we knew it was a sacrifice. Even as a child I knew it wasn't the gift, but the love that went into it.

Well, we can't go back, not even for a visit. I am thankful for the memories, but I am also thankful for the new memories. I have a beautiful family with eleven grandchildren. How can you beat that? I am fortunate to have a husband who not only loves me, but he treasures me. Our children are such a blessing.

I have my mom and brother as well as my extended family. My mom lives next door so I have the honor of visiting



her any time I want. My brother and I were best friends growing up, and we still can depend on each other today. He lives in Texas, but if I needed him, he would be here. I wouldn't trade him for anything.

I am so blessed! How can I whine or complain? I have so many blessings beyond measure. I do not need anything the rest of my life. I must say that the greatest blessing I have is the fact that my family knows who Jesus is and most of them know Him personally. They understand the real meaning of Christmas, and they include it in their Christmas celebration.

Would I like things to slow down? Being honest I would have to say yes, beginning with Christmas. However, I am grateful that I have the privilege of serving our Lord at Christmas and at any other time throughout the year. Perhaps at this Christmas season we all need to think of the great things we already have. We all need to slow down and remember why we have Christmas. May we follow Mary's

example as she pondered over the sayings of the shepherds.

***“For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. ...And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men...And all that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds. But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart.”***

**Luke 2:11-19**

May this Christmas season be a special blessing to each of you as you thank our Lord for His precious gift and slow down enough to ponder over His infinite blessings.

***Merry Christmas!***



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



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# Only A Stable Door.

*Anonymous Contributor*

It was only a stable door; undistinguished: barely a distraction on a busy pathway. Hundreds walked past it every day. This door of gnarled wood had seen it all, rusted nails holding it together, concealing the stable contents from the view of passers-by. But it could not conceal the smells: animals about their business: not the sort of place the average person spent their idle time. Nor were the sounds extinguished. Muted and muffled, but not extinguished. The inquiring would have identified something different about its contents.

It was only a stable door. Its hinges had seen many changes of season, holding the door to protect the occupants. The hinges also opened the door for visitors who usually came for a specific purpose. This is not the kind of place you would come to for a casual visit. Most recently the hinges opened the door to welcome a special couple traveling from Nazareth.

Street traffic had increased in recent days, many people coming to town under government mandate. New faces went past the door, some on their way to visit relatives not seen for some time: the opportunity to renew acquaintance afforded by this government edict too precious to pass up. Others pass on their way to the market: the important business of commerce still not able to be laid aside in this busy time. There were those making pilgrimage to the synagogue: not letting the break of routine interrupt their worship of God. They too pass by this same stable door.

There is nothing about the setting which stirs the curiosity. Whether it be the distraction brought through busyness, the focus of another task or purpose, or the revulsion of animal smells, there were few attracted to investigate. After all, it was only a stable door, and there were clearly more important doors to open or matters to



attend. It was only a stable door, but behind it, laid in a manger, was the most remarkable child ever born.

*If only they'd opened the door.*

If only they'd known that it is the ordinary which carries with it the greatest potential for momentous encounter. It is the very ordinariness which enables it to sneak up on us; our defenses are down: we are not looking, and so are enabled to see with greater freedom, not hindered by presupposition or prejudice.

We are drawn to look for the divine in grand cathedrals, in wondrous architecture, in inspirational music. We prefer to schedule our encounters with God to days or hours, seasons or celebrations. There is an order about our expectations of encountering God, which are not found behind the stable door, an order which closes Him out. The babe of Bethlehem was God revealed in the midst of a chaotic time, placed in the most ordinary of settings, reminding us of God's presence in every part of life.

*It was only a stable door.*

Opportunity knocks: but not always. Sometimes opportunity waits behind the door, ready to welcome the seeker, not hidden from those who would open the



door. This day, there were those who did come to this stable door with a particular purpose. Summoned in unique ways, they passed through this door to behold what was concealed to others. Concealed not because it was deliberately hidden - for it was only crudely so - but concealed because most did not have the time or the inclination to search, let alone to see.

Shepherds came, opening the door in fear and trepidation, yet in eager expectation, in wonder at what they would find. Directed by an angelic host, they pushed their way across the tide of traffic to the stable door, and into the premises it guarded. They had already known what few had seen: an elaborate announcement of birth had been made to those who spent their hours looking at something most people overlook: the night sky. God had entered the midst, unbeknown to many.

'Tis truly amazing that something so beautiful, so awesome, so divine, can be concealed by an object as ordinary as a weather-beaten stable door. 'Tis even more wondrous that the Creator of the universe should choose to enter this world behind such a humble door.

Did others see this child and remain ignorant of His heritage? Were there those who saw merely an infant child, nursing at its mother's breast? Why did the shepherds, and later the wise men see, and so many not?

It is worthy of consideration that there were those who traveled past this stable door on the way to somewhere. Perhaps on the way to the synagogue to worship a Creator who had done something remarkable in their midst, and who returned home missing the greatest encounter of all. How many people walked past that scene oblivious to what was taking place behind that stable door? How many looked in with disdain and pity for a poor family housed in such a way? Few were those privileged enough to stop and encounter God in the middle of such ordinariness.

To be holy, a moment or place needs no special ornament or characteristic. 'Tis the person who needs the stillness of heart and the sharpness of spirit to discern the presence of God. For every moment is a manger, cradling the opportunity to encounter God.

*After all, it was only a stable door.*

# And Finally...



## My Favorite Ornament...

*My number 1 favorite ornament is the one we bought for my daughter's first Christmas. There are no words for how much we love her, what a blessing she is, how hard it was to wait so long and endure lots of setbacks, and how worth the wait she was! I know God created her for our family and I'm so thankful for the joy she brings.*

**S. K.**

*I have an angel tree topper with matted hair and a faded gown that resides on top of my Christmas tree every year. It's not the prettiest thing in the world, but it's the only thing I have left of my Christmases as a child, other than wonderful memories... and oh the memories that flood my soul every time I unpack it with the decorations!*

**B. T.**

*I buy Christmas ornaments throughout the year. Our family loves to travel and I purchase a new ornament on every vacation to remember the occasion. I have an ornament from the Bahamas, Paris, Germany, Jamaica, and several other places. However, my absolute favorite ornament is... well, I'm not really sure exactly what it is. It sort of looks like a gingerbread man without legs that turns into a snowman at the bottom. It's decorated with colored glitter and small stones. It's an ornament that my mom gave to me years ago that hung on our tree when I was a child. My mom said she had to hang it up beyond my reach when I was a toddler because I thought it was a piece of candy and would always try to eat it.*

**S. F.**

*Christmas tree ornaments spark a flood of memories for me. I love the tiny, circular, picture frame of my daughter in her Brownie uniform and the ceramic Snoopy treasured by my son who adored Charlie Brown. I smile when holding a three-inch-long gold-plated Santa sleigh that's etched with puppy teeth marks, the victim of our young yellow Labrador's foray into, under, over, and around the tree. But my favorite ornament has always been a blue glass ball, about the size and weight of a grapefruit, which hung on my family tree growing up. "It's made of German lead-crystal," Mom told us. Mom passed it down to me years later when I was decorating my first "own" Christmas tree. "Take good care of this," she said, "and then give it to your daughter when she has her home."*

**V. M.**

## "Boy Scout Day"

We'd like your help for an upcoming edition of "And Finally..." Boy Scout Day is in February! Write to us in 150 words or less and tell us about your memorable moments in the boy scouts.

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