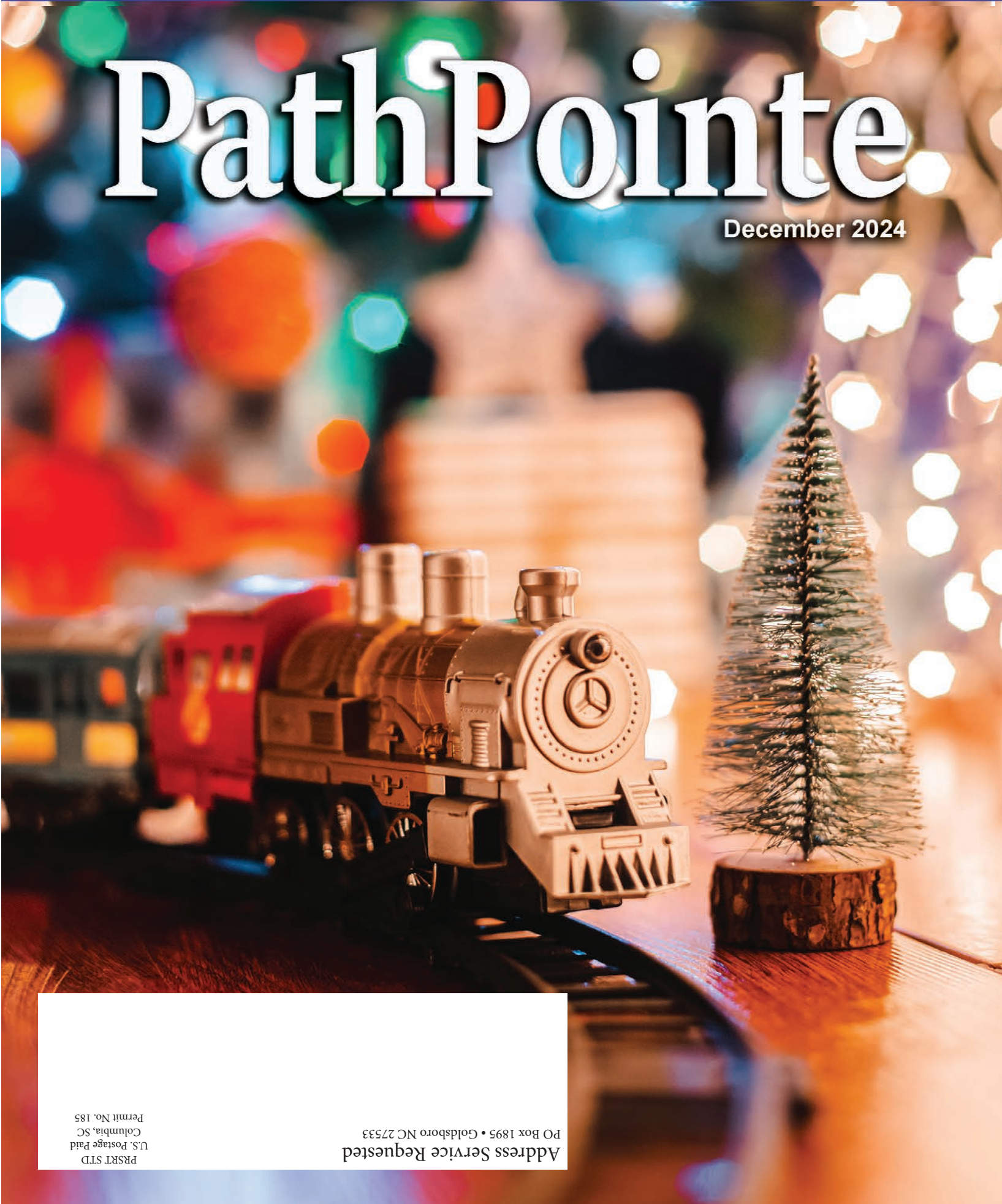


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Christmas Memories

Dr. T. D. Worthington

Several years ago Sherry and I started a new Christmas tradition for our family. Each year we would purchase a small tree to go in our hallway. We called it our *memory tree*. We began to purchase and place ornaments on the tree that would remind us of someone who touched our lives in a special way. Most of the folks honored on the tree are now with the Lord, yet they made a lasting impact upon our memory.

It is always fun selecting a special ornament to symbolize someone's life; a Christmas cow for a faithful friend who owned a dairy, a Christmas cupcake for a great cook, and a hairless Santa for a dear brother who boasted about the beauty of his bald head. We always get a live tree to remind us that these dear friends are still very much alive in Christ. The fresh smell of pine only adds to the celebration. We use old fashioned Christmas lights because we just don't think they would approve of anything else. Garland and tinsel complete the masterpiece. The tree is always fun to decorate as it always

brings back wonderful memories that time could easily erase. As we grow older it seems as if these memories are more important than ever.

Christmas has a way of stirring up memories that seem to hide during the rest of the year. Sometimes on a quiet December evening I like to sit in our living room. The tree is aglow with lights; the fireplace is bestowing its warmth as soft Christmas music plays in the background. Sherry is at work in the kitchen and the aroma of fresh baked cookies is in the air. I close my eyes and suddenly, in a magical moment, I feel as if I am surrounded by everyone I have ever loved. Do I hear granddad singing his favorite hymns? Is that Mom baking in the kitchen? Could that be Dad bringing in the fresh cut tree he had secured to the top of the car? Do I hear our children busy wrapping the gifts they bought for each other?

There, in that quiet moment, I experience the wonderful peace that truly captures all that Christmas

should be, something that can easily be lost in this hectic world. The moment is priceless.

There is a part of me that does not wish to open my tear soaked eyes because such precious moments are rare. For a fleeting moment I relived Granddad's excitement when opening the small gift given him by a child. I captured the look of contentment on Dad's face when his lap was covered by a multitude of gifts from his grandchildren. I picture Mom asking me to taste the fruitcake to make sure it tasted "right" this year. I visualize our children one by one creeping down the stairs on Christmas morning.

With flooding emotion I recall the many joyous Holiday seasons I have been privileged to enjoy with my darling wife. Should I dare open my eyes and clear this lump in my throat? No, I let this moment linger as I thank God for His many blessings. For this one small moment I am surrounded by everyone I have ever loved.

As I grow older I am finding it much harder to adapt to new things. I know much of the new technology is good, but I still long for the old ways, especially at Christmas. I miss the Sears catalog and looking at the large display windows of the downtown stores. I miss going to Western Auto to look at bicycles and BB guns. I miss the old fashioned dime store and the bag of warm peanuts Dad would always buy. I miss seeing everyone place their hands over their heart as the flag came by during the Christmas parade. I miss the longing gaze of a child's eye when looking at a toy on display in a store, a toy he dare not touch. Yet, the most wonderful memories were the hours spent with those I love. That's what is really important. More memorable than any gifts I have ever received are those memories of such happy times when our family was able to be together, and the house was full of love and laughter.

Yet, for this special moment I sit alone in an amazingly crowded room. For within this small room I sense a circle of people who God has used to help make me the person I am today. Family, friends, church members, Pastors, Deacons, co-laborers, neighbors, employers, and employees; they are all there on this cold winter's eve. Each in their own way bringing

a special warmth and glow to the season. I am strengthened by their memory. They are my forever friends. There is something peaceful when you are surrounded by everyone you have ever loved.

This encounter with the past leaves me with a stark reality; one day I will be someone's memory. Our earthly lifespan is temporary, fleeting, and fragile. As we grow older we begin to feel our own impermanence more intensely. The knowledge that one day I will just be a memory to my grandchildren should give me the desire to carefully craft the legacy I will leave behind for them. My book of memories contains many pages, but one day the final chapter will be written. However, although my days of building memories are winding down, our grandchildren are just beginning to write their future memories, and I want to be included. Just as I still feel a strong cord linking me to loved ones in Heaven, I want to be linked to the family I leave behind also.

Perhaps on some quiet winter's evening long after our Lord calls me home, the magic of Christmas will transport someone back in time. They will fondly recall tinsel on the tree, stockings hung by the fire, colorful packages begging to be shaken, and a

sweet aroma coming from the kitchen. Then, at such a magic moment they will feel themselves surrounded by the warm glow of the memories of everyone *they* have ever loved. It will be a grand honor to know that I could be included in that number. Oh, the priceless gift of being invited to such a wondrous event.

Finally, perhaps this season should also make us all a bit more evangelistic. You see, as wonderful as our thoughts and memories of Christmas may be, they in no wise compare with the celebration our Lord has prepared for us in eternity. There, in that celestial city as the saints of God gather around the throne of our Saviour, would it not be wonderful to be surrounded by everyone we have ever loved? Should we not do everything in our power to make sure others know about the greatest gift ever given? Should we not remind them that we only go to heaven because of another tree, that tree being the cross of Calvary? Let's seize the opportunity to reach those that may be ready to learn more about the Christ we celebrate.



Dr. Worthington has been in the ministry almost fifty years and serves as President of Pathway Ministries and Christian Bible College.



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The Christmas Spirit

We have always believed that **GoMix Christian Radio** has a special ministry at Christmas. It is one of the reasons we kick off the season so early. That special mission is to help keep us all focused on Christ. The Christmas celebration is so busy and secularized, that it is easy to get hung up on all the decorating, parties, food, gifts, and relational challenges it brings. Sometimes

this causes us to lose sight of Jesus and why He came.

Do you know why Jesus came? He tells us many times and in many different places in Scripture. It would be fun to go through all of them, but instead, let's just focus on one:

"I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly."

John 10:10

At Christmas, part of what we are celebrating is that now we can live life to the fullest. You cannot live an abundant or full life without being connected to God, and you cannot be connected to God without Jesus.

So should you find yourself a bit stressed this Holiday season or should you find too much of a secular spirit entering your celebrations, come to **GoMix Christian Radio** and pay us a visit. We will do our best to remind you of Jesus and why He came.



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What A Night!

A night of Gospel music, Christian fellowship, and donations raised to help out our friends in Western North Carolina affected by Hurricane Helene turned out to be one great evening at the Greene County Wellness Center in Snow Hill on Friday, November 15th.

We were so excited to welcome The Down East Boys, Dawson Road, and The Moore's Creek Band with Special Guest, Clyde Mattocks. This was a love-offering concert, with all proceeds going directly to *Samaritan's Purse* and their relief efforts in the western part of our state. We stand in awe of our good God as we announce that we were able to issue a check to *Samaritan's Purse* for **\$8,000.00** because of the generous gifts received during this concert and the few days that followed. If you remember, during our **Fall Share-A-Thon**, we were able to raise another **\$5,257.20** through your donations for this same cause. That's over **\$13,000.00** to the Glory of God!

Throughout the day on November 15th, the concert site in Snow Hill also served as a drop-off point for Christmas toys and gently used winter items. With your help, a truck full of toys and supplies is heading to those in need just in time for the cold, Holiday Season.

There are so many to thank for their generosity. We'd like to thank all of the groups for giving us a toe-tapping good time! Special thanks to the Greene County Wellness Center for letting us use their space for this special evening. Wayne Bullock and his wife, Rose, did so much to help organize this event. There were quite a few members from Belvoir Free Will Baptist Church that helped out behind the scenes as well. We definitely want to thank our *GoMix* staff for their extra work. Lastly, big thanks to the generous givers that opened their hearts (*and their wallets*) to help those in need.

THE BIRTH OF *Christ* The Specialness of Christmas

Dr. Sherry Worthington



Not everyone feels the same way about Christmas that my husband and I do. It is our favorite time of the year. I know some people who can't wait for Christmas to be over, but we are always disappointed when it is time to take down the decorations. We do go overboard sometimes, but it is once a year.

Christmas is special in many ways. Of course, it goes without saying. Christ's birth is the Reason for the Season. The Christmas cantatas and the candlelight services shared in His honor and the manger scenes that remind us of that starry night a long time ago are amazing. The sermons preached all over the land remind each of us of how this lowly babe came into a sin-cursed world to redeem us all. What a beautiful message! One that cannot be improved upon. In many homes on Christmas day, families read or tell the Christmas story to their children before the rest of the festivities take

place. Jesus has not been forgotten in these homes.

I really believe that all of the specialness of Christmas is wrapped up in that tiny babe of Bethlehem and my Saviour who died on the cross. You see, for without Him, Christmas would not exist. There would be no trees, no gifts, no special celebrations, no decorations, and no Christmas memories. Besides Christ's birth at Christmas, my memories are the best thing about Christmas.

I see Christ in all of these things. One of my earliest memories of Christmas is our Christmas tree. It was not the prettiest tree in town. It was one of those tinsel trees with the color wheel. I remember sitting around the tree and my dad singing Christmas songs. He did love to sing, and he did love his Jesus. I can remember him singing while he was in the shower, while he was

working, and while he was walking through the house. Dad may have sung other songs, but all the songs I remember him singing were about his Jesus. At Christmas, he sang the carols. I remember going Christmas caroling through the neighborhood and at the nursing home. My grandmother was in a nursing home for many years. He had a heart for those who had to be there. He also sang in the Christmas cantatas and even dressed the part. That was one of the few times my dad wore a beard. The angels sang at Jesus' birth and my dad relived it every Christmas.

I also remember fondly the gifts my grandmother gave me. No, none of them were fancy or expensive. In fact, they were quite ordinary. She gave me my first ring. It was pretty and simple, but it was a gift from her heart. As she aged, her gifts were socks and undergarments. I always knew those gifts came as



a great sacrifice for her, but they were always given with a great amount of love. Every Christmas she would make a meal fit for a king. We all contributed, but she made her special dressing and her chocolate cake. The cake was special because of the love that went into her making the cake. After she passed away, I was determined to learn to make that cake. I wanted the memory to live on. My grandmother loved her Jesus, too. Her gifts were special, but God gave us the most precious gift we could ever receive. He gave us His Son. No gift will ever come close, but our gifts of love to each other will hopefully remind us in some small way of the Father's gift to us.

I only have memories of my mom and dad left now. They are in Heaven with the Father. They loved everything about Christmas. I do miss them. I look back at the

pictures of the family together. That's what they enjoyed most about Christmas. The family being together. I am so thankful that my parents raised me in a Christian home, and they taught me to love others. Yes, we had gifts and family gatherings. The gag gifts my dad and my uncle gave to each other still make me smile. We decorated and fought the crowds, but what stands out the most is the love and respect we shared for each other. My parents introduced me to Christ through their lives and words. What a precious gift!

My recent memories and the new ones I am making are just as precious. My husband loves Christmas. We decorate the house, and we always say we need to scale back- as he picks up one more strand of lights. All of the children have their own homes now, but we can still sit in the living room and hear the sounds of their voices.

The memories never fade. We love to sit and look at the Christmas tree lights. Each twinkle takes us back to Christmases of the past. We can look around the Christmas tree and see all of the grandchildren in different stages of life. We are so blessed to have so many wonderful memories. God is so good!

Be careful not to focus on negative memories. The problems we can't fix, the family member that is not with us, the bill we can't pay, the rebellious child, or the pain in our back. We must focus on the wonderful blessings of this Christmas season.

The first and most precious gift of Christmas is our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. I challenge you to see how many ways you can see Jesus in this Christmas. It may be as simple as holding the door for someone when they have their hands full, or it may be taking the opportunity to share Jesus with someone who is hurting. You may observe Jesus in other people this season. Share Christ's love in every way that you can. Time is short. Use it wisely!

“For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.”
Isaiah 9:6

Merry Christmas!



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



A Lot 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!

Jesus and His disciples were passing through a village when they stopped off at the home of sisters, Mary and Martha. 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 with her concerns that Mary needed to help her with some of the work instead of just 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. I have often been able to relate a little more to Martha. Everything needs to be perfect when the holiday guests arrive. I feel like my home should look like a picture cut out of a magazine. I want the hand towel in the bathroom folded just right. The pillow on the couch belongs on the right side, not the left side. I'll even straighten a picture on the wall when you're not looking. It can be so exhausting!

I can understand Martha. 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 those were the days long before cell phones, email, or the postal service, I'm sure she didn't have much notice that she was even having guests at her house that particular day. Can you imagine having a big group of people over last-minute you hadn't planned on? To top it off, these weren't just any old guests. The Messiah Himself had come! So there she is running around like crazy, and she looks over to see her baby sister sitting around talking. I would be a bit aggravated at this point, too.

Can you relate to Martha? Maybe some of us can more than others. So, let's not stop there. Let's use our imagination and try to “relate” a little bit more. Imagine the gathering

is now over and Jesus is gone. Martha is finished cleaning and sits down to rest. Conversation in the house turns to something Jesus said. Everyone is talking about it... but Martha. She must have missed it while she was busy doing other things. Then there was that story He told about the stranger He and His disciples passed on the road. How exciting that must have been! Wait... Martha missed that, too. Oh, she got to spend a little bit of time with Him and it was the best of time! Looking back though, she sees she missed some pretty great opportunities to spend precious time with her Lord.

Christmas is always such a busy time that goes by way too fast. There's already a lot on my to-do list, and your's probably isn't much different. 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 are no longer with us, what would I do if they could come back for just a little while? I wouldn't care about any presents, how clean their house was, or what kind of food we ate... I would just want to spend time with them. Precious time with those I love. If

you are blessed to be surrounded by family and friends 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 each of us! Our Heavenly Father is always there, and He's never too busy for us. 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.



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Vulnerability

What a wonderful time of year when we celebrate the birth of our Saviour! He left His throne as Sovereign of the universe to come to this insignificant planet as a servant to insignificant mankind. He set aside His power to become vulnerable to His creation. As an infant, He became totally dependent on others for His most basic needs.

Vulnerability...Haven't we all been vulnerable at one time or another? Who hasn't been hurt by being vulnerable with the wrong person? Whether it was by a childhood bully or a dear adult friend, we have each felt the pain of becoming vulnerable to someone we thought we could trust. Vulnerability is one of the worst feelings known to man. We erect invisible walls to avoid the experience.

But vulnerability was a large part of the grand plan of our Creator. He became vulnerable in a way that none of us has experienced. He submitted to His enemies. He submitted to win His enemies. He subjected Himself to scorn, ridicule, false accusations, physical and emotional pain, and ultimately death on the cross. He did that just so that we, His accusers and abusers, could live eternally with Him in glory.

Perhaps we need to look at His example as we face vulnerability. Think about those who have taken advantage of you. Can you relieve them of any retribution for the way they offended, remembering that we have all probably offended someone along our walk through this world? Could our vulnerability be part of His plan to help us mature? **Psalm 119:71** says, ***"It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes."*** The psalmist recognized that "the humility of affliction, the stones of adversity, were God's gift to him to draw him closer to God." (Liberty Bible Commentary) Admittedly, I have on occasion demanded my rights in the face of vulnerability. How much better it is to surrender to the example of Christ, to become vulnerable, to be more like our Saviour! How much better to leave the fight to the One Who can fight our battles for us! Can we appreciate His vulnerability more if we are more vulnerable? When it seems impossible to forgive the offender, seek His help. He knows how to love when it seems impossible. Ponder that.



Mrs. Connie Peters has two children and resides in Princeton, NC. She serves as an instructor at Pathway Christian Academy in Goldsboro.

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