

# BAPTIST BIBLE TRIBUNE

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ON THE TABLE

## Is it time to celebrate Advent?

by Keith Bassham | Editor

I think I've mentioned this before, but working a month ahead on a magazine gives me a headache around the holidays. The November election was just a few days ago, and we've been working on the Christmas issue of the *Tribune* since before Halloween. It's hard to get myself in the proper frame of mind to write about stables and managers and such.

Life is not like it used to be. Before DVDs and streaming video, you could figure out how you were doing with things like holiday planning based on how the TV networks scheduled the Charlie Brown specials (it's still a hoot to hear Linus tell the Christmas story). Life is more complex in an asynchronous social media-fied world, and planning for the holidays takes more thinking time than it used to. All I know is I positively refuse to play any Bing Crosby Christmas music before watching the WKRP "Thanksgiving Turkey Promotion" episode.

I've never been big on celebrating holidays when you aren't supposed to. I object to shifting holiday observances around to accommodate a three-day weekend. My kids and I had a terrific row a few years ago when they wanted to shift our family's Christmas celebration a couple of days for what seemed to them a good reason. I grudgingly cooperated, but I made enough noise they haven't tried doing it since.

I've been thinking that over all maybe observing a season of Advent makes better sense. Advent (and Lent, for that matter) was noted in the Almanac section of the first King James Version Bibles in 1611, so that should make it sort of okay. And before you object mightily to embracing this new bit of liturgy, you might remember that before 1820, observing Christmas among Baptists was almost unheard of, just as it was among Puritans, Presbyterians, and Quakers. At the time, Christmas celebrating was still more a European idea, you know. Congress even met on Christmas Day from 1789 to 1855, public schools met in Boston on Christmas until 1870, and the first state to make the day a legal holiday was Alabama in 1836. Christmas has come a long way since then, or has it?

Think about it. Christmas, the way it is observed in our culture, is almost certain to be mostly secular, materialistic, and commercial. If there is some religious significance for people, it is usually more sentimentality than anything else. The most popular Christmas song, "I'm Dreaming of a White Christmas," was written by a Jew and makes no mention at all of God or Jesus. It's all about going home and being with friends and remembering good old days.

Advent, on the other hand, is all about the appearance of Jesus into the world, which is what we want Christmas to be about. I don't know that celebrating Advent is the way to go, but it may be the solution to the Christmas wars. I'm just throwing it out there. I, and the *Tribune* staff, wish you a wonderful Christmas in the meantime.

*Keith Bassham*

# THE BAPTIST BIBLE TRIBUNE

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PRESIDENTIAL PERSPECTIVE

# Lengthen the cords, strengthen the stakes



by Linzy Slayden | President | BBFI

As our Fellowship embarks on a journey into a new year and a renewed emphasis, I can say that our future is as bright as the promises of God. There is a great word from God for our Fellowship in Isaiah 54:2: “...lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes.” God said to the nation of Israel, *You are in a tent. It is my tent that holds my people. You should be constantly lengthening the tent and strengthening the tent.* I can make that application to our Fellowship. The BBFI has always been marked by soul winning, church planting, world missions, and a strong emphasis on the Word of God. These emphases, with a unique local church flavor, God has blessed and used in a wonderful way.

Today we still need to lengthen our cords and we still need to strengthen our stakes. In light of that, I bring four priorities to my tenure as president of this Fellowship:

In the area of missions, I want to challenge every pastor of the BBFI within the next two years to take at least one mission trip somewhere outside America. Pastors should schedule at least one mission trip with people in their church so that they might come to know firsthand the opportunities of sharing the gospel with a world in need of a Savior.

My second priority would be in evangelism. I am asking our state fellowships to focus on encouraging and equipping for evangelism in their meetings. Let’s help one another build churches.

My third priority is to move and motivate our Fellowship to develop a strategy to reach the next generation.

Finally, I have a burden that we begin to reach out to the next generation of pastors. We must move and motivate our younger pastors and those who would be future leaders in our Fellowship to take interest in and to understand the importance of our Fellowship.

Let’s embrace a new day for our Fellowship. Now is the time to arise and build. Now is not the time for division, now is the time for cohesion. Now is not the time for retreat, now is the time to charge this world with the sword of the Spirit and the gospel of Jesus Christ. Now is not the time to break ranks, now is the time to join ranks and to go for God. I don’t expect everyone to dot every “i” that I dot, nor cross every “t” that I cross, and neither can anyone else in our Fellowship. I can sleep at night knowing that some pastors do things differently than I do. But I say to all of my fellow pastors, we can get together on the Word of God, we can get together on the gospel of Christ, we can get together on the love of Jesus, and let us lengthen our cords and strengthen our stakes until everyone has had the opportunity to enter into the tent of the grace of God.

WORLDWIDE MISSIONS

# Geographically different, spiritually needy



by Jon Konnerup | Mission Director

The Baptist Bible Fellowship International has had a missionary presence in Argentina since 1960. Throughout the years, more missionaries arrived and built strong ministries — planting growing churches and training dedicated leaders.

The ministry in Argentina has not been easy. The people are content in their lifestyle and religion, not realizing just how lost they are without trusting in Jesus Christ. In addition, purchasing land and buildings for meeting places has become difficult with the skyrocketing costs. Yet our missionaries have remained faithful, starting new churches and training others for the ministry.

I had the opportunity to visit several of the churches and ministries during my recent visit to Argentina, though I wasn’t able to visit with every missionary or even see every ministry of those I did visit. I preached in churches that have been around for over 40 years and in churches that are less than five years old. Each church has the same zeal and desire to reach its nation with the gospel. There is a solid core of believers and leaders that I believe provides a strong foundation upon which they can build to make an even greater impact in their nation.

In addition to these ministries, I visited a full-time Bible institute that has been established to help churches train their young leaders. That training includes two years of internship in a church.

While in Argentina, I attended and spoke at their annual national pastors’ meeting. There were a great number of pastors, church members, and BBFI missionaries who attended. They met in



tents set up on the grounds of one of the first churches started by the late BBFI missionary Jimmy Strickland.

Mark Hodges was also invited to speak, and his messages encouraging pastors were

well received. I preached on missions and on how the Argentine churches were also given the Great Commission and have a responsibility to spread the gospel around the world. Although they have been taught missions and have started to send out their own missionaries, I challenged them to go even further and see how God will bless them. The music was tremendous, and I was told all the speakers did a wonderful job of encouraging and challenging each other. The atmosphere was exciting and the Lord God was lifted up and glorified.



## IGNITE forums visit colleges



by Wayne Guinn | Director | NCPO

**T**he IGNITE Conference at BBC Springfield this year took place October 14-16 and featured a multi-cultural approach to church planting. America has become a vast melting pot of cultures and if we are going to impact our nation with the gospel we must recognize these cultural differences. We invited the Brothers of Cyrene, a group of black pastors whose burden is to reach black America with the gospel of Christ, to participate in the conference. We also had a group of Spanish pastors and a group of Native Americans. Jack Baskin was our

keynote speaker and challenged us with the fact that God has brought the mission field to our shores and it's our obligation to reach them with the gospel. He also



Speakers at the IGNITE forum at Baptist Bible College

did a breakout session on how to impact the Asian culture. It was a great two days and I believe it had a major effect on the students.

Boston Baptist College hosted the NCPO IGNITE Church Planting Forum on their campus November 4-5. What a tremendous spirit on campus as the students and faculty were challenged about church planting in rural areas by Dan Lamb, vice president of the BBFI and pastor of Hillsboro Bible Baptist Church in Hillsboro, Ohio. Then Charles Lyons, pastor of Armitage Baptist Church in Chicago, presented the call to start churches in our urban areas of the big cities. This was followed up by breakout sessions involving Rob Willis, pastor of The Journey Baptist Church in Rochester, New Hampshire, and Josh Bevan, pastor of a new church (Lighthouse Baptist Church) in Xenia, Ohio. The students and faculty responded well to the diversity of rural and urban ministries. They really appreciated the passion with which each of the speakers shared his heart about church planting.

The presidents, administration, and staff of both colleges did a terrific job of hosting the conferences, and we pray that God will raise up more church planters through our colleges.



Charles Lyons speaking at Boston Baptist College

## let the nations rejoice

BBFI GLOBAL FELLOWSHIP MEETING  
FEBRUARY 21-24, 2011

The purpose of this historic, international meeting is to see the nations rejoice for God's glorious gift – Jesus Christ. We want to remember the past, rejoice in the present, and renew our efforts for the future. We want to celebrate what God has done over the past 60 years, rejoice in the current opportunities we have, and cast a vision for the future with the intent of coordinating our efforts from each nation to reach out to all peoples with the Gospel.

Those who attend this meeting will see the big picture of God's work around the world through the BBFI. Leaders will meet leaders from other regions enabling them to see they are not alone but all work together to reach our world for Jesus Christ.

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# DIGRESSIONS

Digressions incontestably are the sunshine; they are the life, the soul of reading.

—Laurence Sterne

## Atheists, agnostics, Mormons, and Jews score well on religious knowledge

In a test of religious knowledge used by the Pew Research Center in late spring, atheists, agnostics, Jews, and Mormons made the highest scores, answering about 20 of the 32 questions correctly. White evangelicals scored about 18. According to Pew Research, “the U.S. Religious Knowledge Survey shows that large numbers of Americans are uninformed about the tenets, practices, history and leading figures of major faith traditions — including their own. Many people also think the constitutional restrictions on religion in public schools are stricter than they really are.”

Most Americans, however, were able to answer at least half of the survey’s Bible questions. “For example, roughly seven-in-ten (71%) know that, according to the Bible, Jesus was born in Bethlehem. More than six-in-ten (63%) correctly name Genesis as the first book of the Bible. And more than half know that the Golden Rule — “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you” — is not one of the Ten Commandments.”

Editor’s note — The questions Christians appeared to miss most often had to do with other world religions, and it might be more accurate to say the ones who scored higher than the Christians know more about “religions” than about “religion.”

Source: see the complete study and a religious knowledge test at [www.pewresearch.org](http://www.pewresearch.org)

## Religious studies on the rise

On campuses across the nation, religion is becoming a popular subject of study, *The Buffalo News* in New York said, citing several local colleges that have expanded their courses in response to increased interest in the topic.

The newspaper referred to a 22% increase in the number of college students enrolled as religious studies majors compared to the previous decade and said that while many students don’t describe themselves as religious, they are intrigued by religion.

Patrick Lynch, chairman of the department of religious studies and theology at Canisius College, suspects the current economy, threats of terrorism, and the war in Afghanistan have steered more students toward examining questions about values and the purpose of life, *The News* said.

“They see the global ramifications of religion and as a result, they’re really very interested,” Marianne Ferguson, a religious studies professor at Buffalo State University, said.

At another local college, a 100-level course called “World Religions” is so popular that only upperclassmen get to take it.

Source: ©Copyright 2010 Baptist Press

## Is the Christian divorce rate as high as that of non-Christians?

Many people believe that Christian marriages end in divorce just as often as non-Christian, but it turns out, using the best data available, this is not true.


To illustrate, here are the divorce rates among ever-married respondents in the General Social Survey (GSS, 2000-2004) — one of the best known sources of sociological data. “Frequent” is attending church about once a week or more.

- 58%** non-frequent Black Protestants
- 54%** non-frequent Evangelicals
- 51%** no religion (e.g., atheists & agnostics)
- 48%** ALL NON-CHRISTIANS
- 48%** non-frequent, other religions
- 47%** frequent Black Protestants
- 42%** non-frequent, mainline Protestants
- 41%** ALL CHRISTIANS
- 41%** non-frequent Catholics
- 39%** Jews
- 38%** frequent other religions
- 34%** frequent Evangelicals
- 32%** ALL FREQUENT CHRISTIANS
- 32%** frequent mainline Protestants
- 23%** frequent Catholics

Some qualifications: The real question here is whether being Christian lessens divorce, and while the data above suggest “yes,” they can be interpreted otherwise. Perhaps people who get divorced also stop attending church. Perhaps those who attend church are also those who would stay married anyway. In addition, members of other religions also have low divorce rates. This should not be surprising since these other religions, such as Judaism, Mormonism, and Christian Science, have similar moral teachings about divorce.

Source: [www.brewright.com](http://www.brewright.com)





# Swaddling CLOTHES

BY NOEL SMITH, EXCERPTED FROM HIS EDITORIAL, DECEMBER 22, 1950

Nothing that men ever imagined,  
nothing that men ever thought,  
nothing that men ever said,  
nothing that men ever did,  
nothing that men ever recorded

has touched the hem of the garment of  
the circumstantial manner of the birth of  
a Savior in the city of David, who is  
Christ the Lord.

The restraint, the simplicity, the illuminating detail with which St. Luke records this event in the second chapter of his Gospel is the most beautiful of all the beautiful things that ever appealed to the eye, the idea the most haunting that ever entered the mind, the spirit the most fragrant and healing that ever caressed the heart. After two thousand years, in one of the most cynical and cruel ages of history, St. Luke's story is as brilliant as the Arabian stars, as fragrant as the rose of Sharon's plain, as haunting as the parting strains of a great music, as appealing as a smile toying with infant lips — as true as the Eternal God.

Prophetic announcement of this Event had been made in every age for 4,000 years; announced through the lips of patriarch, through

the lips of lawgiver, through the stainless lips of angel, through the lips of prophet, through type and symbol. The seed of the woman would bruise the serpent's head. The scepter would not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet until Shiloh came. A child would be born, a son would be given, the government would be upon his shoulder; and his name would be called Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. And it would all take place in Bethlehem Ephratah, the smallest of the thousands of Judah. It would take place 434 years after Nehemiah rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem and Ezra restored the ancient worship.

The faint, appealing whines of Abel's dy-

ing lamb announced it. The colossal failure of Nimrod — one of the mightiest men ever born, whose voice echoes across the Mesopotamian world this very day — to create a universal nation, announced it. Nebuchadnezzar, greatest monarch of the ancient world and one of the greatest ever born, announced it: "How great are his signs! and how mighty are his wonders; his kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and his dominion is from generation to generation."

So far as the world is concerned, so far as the masses of men are concerned, including Joseph and Mary, it is all routine and commonplace. A centralized, autocratic government is making the rich richer and the poor poorer. Its bureaucratic tentacles reach out to every man and woman in the empire. All must pay tribute



in one form or another. Today a census has been ordered, and compliance with the decree involves burden and expense. The poor are sewing new patches on old garments.

The tax collectors are being hated and cursed, and many a Matthew and Zaccheus among them is reflecting upon the emptiness of life. Shepherds are spending another long and weary day with their flocks. Simeon sits on the steps of the Temple awaiting the Messianic Hope. The inn is crowded with the mill-run of humanity, careless, flippant — and others, no doubt, serious and worn and sad. Joseph and Mary arrive, and they are very tired, especially she. And there is no room in the inn. And it is getting dark. In this world it does seem that might makes right and that the weak go to the wall. The rabbis are always talking about a Messianic Hope — but they have been doing it for all these years.

And all of that doesn't take into account the clanking of the chains of 60 million slaves over the Graeco-Roman world, nor the revolting forms of vice practiced by the great and mighty, nor the infanticide, nor the degradation of women.

The Hope of the Ages appeared in such circumstances. A tired, lonely mother tears a dress into strips, which Luke refers to as swaddling clothes, wraps God incarnate in the strips, and gently lays Him upon a bed of straw. It makes foolish the wisdom of this world. It confounds the wise.

Never forget it: God is the God of commonplace circumstances, of hard, severe, monotonous circumstances. It is out of such that all of His great movements have originated. Circumstances for all, especially to us who believe, are God's providences. Never before in our lives have they so sapped our vitalities and

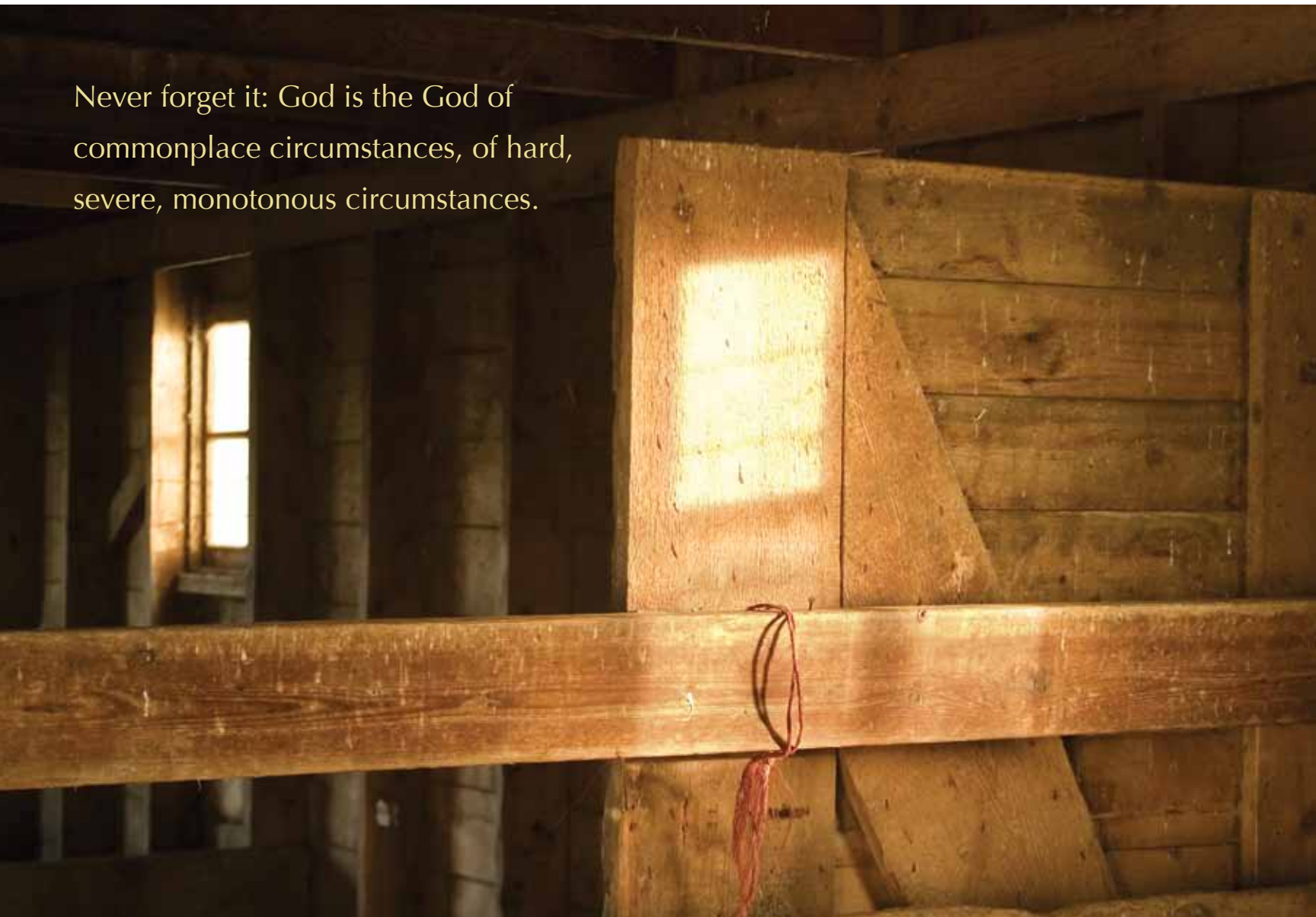
energies as today. We are volcanoes of inward conflicts, frustrations and repressed hostilities. Day by day we feel ourselves lashed and driven by them closer and closer to the abyss of cynicism, fatalism and abject despair. Today good men curse the day they were born.

Let us read again St. Luke's story of the birth of Christ. Let us see the God behind it all. Let us remember His own words about His "foolishness" being "wiser than men," and His having "chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty."

There is none of us but what has some strips of cloth and a pallet of straw. In the midst of all our sufferings, let us challenge God with them and see what He can do. God knows a good deal about swaddling clothes and beds of straw.

*Noel Smith was the founding editor of the Baptist Bible Tribune.*

Never forget it: God is the God of commonplace circumstances, of hard, severe, monotonous circumstances.







# Apologetics

FOR CHRISTMAS



Tenth article in the series

## With Good Reason

by Keith Bassham

The Christmas story is a fitting conclusion to the apologetics series, for in that story I see at least four apologetic strains of thought, ribbons if you will, that will tie up a package.

First, there is the prophetic ribbon. When Jesus came, he was expected, at least by some. For instance, take the story of the wise men in Matthew 2:1-6:

*Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him. When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. And when he had gathered all the chief*

*priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born. And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judaea: for thus it is written by the prophet, And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel.*

Two things stand out here. First, something triggered this expedition from the East by these “wise men,” (magi, a person akin to a combination of a priest and astronomer), and that something is often thought to have been the Hebrew scriptures introduced into Babylon during the time of the prophet Daniel. That and the sign in the sky (the “star”) prompted them to make their way toward Judea. The



## PROPHECY

To nail the birthplace alone 700 years before the event...

**has to be more than coincidence, but the knowledge to specify those other details requires supernatural insight....**



# REALITY

Both Matthew and Luke give us historic context.

**We are not expected to believe that Jesus came into the world as some sort of legend.**

second thing that stands out about this text has to do with Herod's inquiry of the scribes, who themselves turn to the prophet Micah, chapter five and verse two, that describes the birthplace of the coming King as Bethlehem — written 700 years before the birth of Jesus Christ.

Other prophecies concerning the birth of Jesus designate him as a member of the Israelite tribe of Judah, a descendant of King David, whose coming would cause great sorrow among “the daughters of Rachel” (this has to do with Herod's slaughter of the infants), and a temporary stay in Egypt shortly after his birth.

Of course, other prophecies about his life and ministry are also numerous, but take just the ones having to do with the birth of Jesus. To nail the birthplace alone 700 years before the event — and not merely the nation, but the precise village — has to be more than coincidence, but the knowledge to specify those other details at the same time requires supernatural insight, a word from God.

But, if he was expected, and the prophets did tell about him ahead of time, why was he rejected and eventually executed? Actually, that rejection is also foretold in the Old Testament as well. However, there were some who both expected him and gladly welcomed him. In Luke 2, Joseph and Mary are presenting the newborn Jesus in Jerusalem and in verses 25-32 we read,

*And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and the same hath seen thy salvation, Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.*

No doubt there were many other devout souls who were delighted to know the Son of God had come into the world.

The second ribbon on the package is reality. Jesus was born in real time and space. Both Matthew and Luke give us historic context. We are not expected to believe that Jesus came into the world as some sort of legend. Joseph and Mary and Zacharias and Elizabeth and Simeon and Caesar and Herod and Quirinius (Cyrenius) are real people, and Bethlehem and Jerusalem and Nazareth are real places, and all these events happened in real time.

Ironically, it is on this subject, time, where

Luke's story runs into difficulty (hey, we're doing apologetics, remember). For one thing, historians can't find a record of a universal decree matching the one Luke describes in his gospel. Likewise, on the surface it looks like he may have gotten the timing wrong on the Cyrenius and Syria business.

In Luke's defense I will say this. His gospel was written not long after the events he describes, and he does say in the opening that he had a good knowledge of the events and persons involved, so I am going to assume a couple of things. For one, he couldn't be making things up because there were people still around who would know better. Two, just because it appears he got some timing or a person's title wrong does not make it so. I can remember reading a text that said Moses could not have written Genesis or any of the other books of Moses because writing had not yet been invented. I also read somewhere that Genesis was wrong because it said Abraham had camels and camels had not been domesticated in Abraham's time. And for a long time no archeological evidence existed for Hittites, or for the monarchy of David, or even Philistines — outside the Bible, of course. And yet, in all these circumstances, eventually archeology provided independent witness to the facts as presented in the Bible.

So what is the truth? We do know that Augustus did authorize a number of censuses (that is the meaning of the “taxed” here), and there may not have been a single over-arching decree as we would understand it, but such a census was definitely his policy and consistent with what we know of him. On the timing related to Cyrenius, there may be a problem or there may not. Again, it may depend on the way we read the text, how rulers are designated, grammar issues...I've seen all sorts of explanations. The bottom line is this: though there may be some difficulties and objections, there are solutions, and given the history of archeology, the ultimate solution may be in some long-buried room waiting to be discovered. Until then, I'm inclined to give Luke the benefit of the doubt.

Don't get me wrong. I'm not saying Luke was off. Far from it. But say that he was. Does that really invalidate everything else in his gospel, or in the rest of the New Testament? Scholars may really want to quibble about



decrees and obscure artifacts, but certainly the person sharing your office does not. However, it would give the unbelieving world great comfort if they could use a technicality in one part of a Bible reading to reject something else far more important. For instance, if Luke is off on the name of a Syrian ruler, perhaps nothing he says should be taken seriously. If there is no decree from Caesar Augustus, then perhaps there is no virgin birth, nothing special about Jesus other than he had a more spiritual way of looking at things than most people. And, if we can fault Luke in chronology, then maybe there's nothing in that story about the rich man burning in hell either. You can see how people might want to think such things.

Thus the importance of Christmas apologetics. Jesus, a real person, was born in real time and space.

The third apologetic ribbon has to do with the purpose of Jesus coming, and you might notice I've used that phrase a few times in place of "birth" or "being born." One of the great theological truths of the Bible is that Jesus did not begin to exist in Bethlehem about 2,100 years ago, but that he came. Hear his words to Pontius Pilate (another real person in space and time) in John 18:37: "Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth."

And read these words from his prayer in John 17:

*And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. (verse 3)*

*And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was. (verse 5)*

*As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. (verse 18)*

*...for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world. (verse 24)*

Jesus was not merely born as you and I were. He obviously existed and had a relation-

ship with the Father before his fleshly introduction into the world in Bethlehem. If anyone has ever asked the question, "Why does the doctrine of the Trinity matter?" you may want to start here. More than 40 times in John's gospel, Jesus refers to himself as being sent, and in one of the most-loved passages in the entire Bible, the sending is there:

*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. (John 3:16)*

And why was he sent, for what purpose did he come? He answers the question himself in Luke 19:10: "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."

Placing those two texts together (John 3:16 and Luke 19:10), we see that God has commissioned and sent His Son into the world to be born as a man, and dying as a man on the cross, he provided a way of salvation to all those who believe on him.

There are many things that Jesus did do, and many things he could have done, but there was one thing he had to do, and that was the purpose for which he came. His teachings, his example, his compassion — all are described in detail in the four gospels and commented upon in the other New Testament texts, but the acts of Jesus which receive the spotlight are his death and resurrection.

The last ribbon on the apologetic Christmas package is the world stage these last 2,000 years.

Several years ago, the late D. James Kennedy wrote an article (and a book) describing the world if Jesus had not come. Recalling how George Bailey saw what impact his existence had, and what his non-existence implied in *It's a Wonderful Life*, he said,

*But what if Jesus had never been born? What difference would it have made if a Bethlehem stable had never served as a makeshift delivery room? A great deal. Jesus, the greatest man who ever lived, has changed virtually every aspect of human life. Much of what we take for granted — our high regard for human life, the elevation of women, education, science, charity, hospitals, capitalism, the*

*(continued on page 27)*

# PURPOSE

God has commissioned and sent His Son into the world

**to be born as a man, and dying as a man on the cross, He provided a way of salvation to all those who believe on Him.**





# BOOK REVIEW

## Minister's Instruction Manual available

By Keith Bassham

### *The Minister's Instruction Manual*

By Mel Brown

Published by Guidance House Publishing  
308 pages - \$29.95

I was so happy to receive W. A. Criswell's *Guidebook for Pastors* not many years after I began my pastoral ministry, and I do not hesitate to consult it even today. But you need more than one book on the pastoral theology shelf, and a valuable addition to your collection should be *The Minister's Instruction Manual* by Pastor Mel Brown of Edgewood Baptist Church in Rock Island, Illinois.

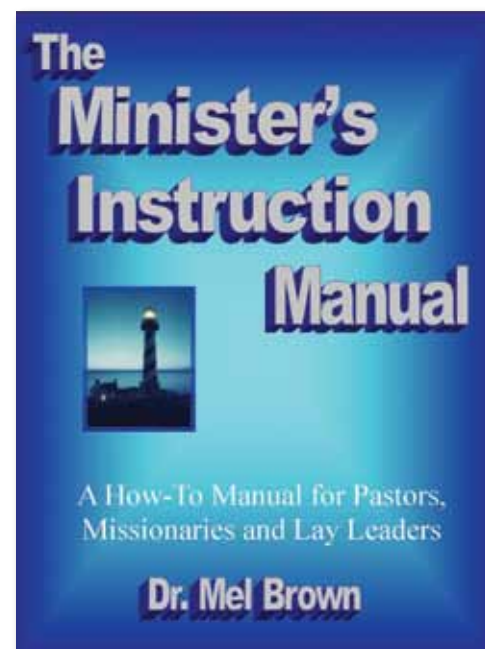
First, you need to know something about the author and reasoning behind the manual. Brown has served the Edgewood church more than 40 years. His education includes Purdue University, Evangel College (B.A.), Baptist Bible College (B.Th.), Western Illinois University (M.S.), and Northern Illinois University (Ed.D.) His graduate study was primarily in the field of clinical psychology and counseling.

As a pastor, Mel Brown has been particularly effective in training missionary and pastoral interns, and the manual he has produced is an outgrowth of that experience. He says that though the young men and women who came to the church were adequately prepared theologically, he wanted to give them in two years' time the benefit of his insight, wisdom, and practical experience. The entire description of the training is part of the manual (that form alone is a valuable piece of information), and it forms the basis of the book.

The contents fill a little over 300 pages (it is 8.5 by 11 and appears to be a workbook), and it is indexed. Roughly the first half deals with personal preparation, spiritual, moral, and psychological, of course, but Pastor Brown quickly gets into practical issues of leadership, communication, and decision-making. Several charts illustrate his instruction, and there are frequent checklists and guidelines included to summarize the main points. The text is no-nonsense, with few *non sequiturs*

to distract. Had the subject matter been fully expanded, the book would have easily run into a 1,000 pages or more, but what you have here is marrow, the essence, around which you can gather more volumes to fully cover the subject of preaching, for instance, for which Brown reserves eight pages, with an additional two pages on funerals and five on teaching. However, where would you find a list of about 40 sermon topics required (not merely suggested) of interns over the course of their training, including sermons detailing their personal testimonies, call to the ministry, Baptist distinctives, etc. And, as is the case in each section, Brown includes a sermon preparation checklist and a number of direct Bible citations having to do with the subject, before moving on.

After the sections on personal preparation and the duties of a pastor (by the way, there is some good instruction on how to conduct a business meeting — how many of us learned these things the hard way?), Pastor Brown has material about the ministries of the church. He makes general reference to Rick Warren's Purpose Driven model, describes how ministry teams work, and gives details for a workable outreach program based both on personal evangelism and more general evangelistic enterprises. I was surprised there was not more material on missions (there is a helpful section in the Pastor's Duties section on raising missionary support) given Edgewood's outstanding missionary program, but the subject probably would need a complete section or perhaps even another manual to do it well. Two other aspects of the Church section get my notice. There is a two-page outline on the subject of worship. The individual topics are brief but informative, almost in a talking-point format. The other noted section is the one on youth and children's ministry, subjects often ignored in general



pastoral training books. Some may be put off by references to secular psychological theories, but I think we can trust Pastor Brown to deal with these things in a balanced and scriptural fashion. Again, those sections end with numerous Bible citations for scriptural principles.

The last section is a collection of appendices — forms for weddings, facility use, and worship service planning, outlines of anticipated problems and suggested solutions, and a longer section on dealing with suffering. I'm not sure why that was placed as an appendix, but it is good, and especially valuable I think for a younger person just entering ministry.

Naturally, any book of this nature will have its faults, and as an editor and preacher myself, I could suggest a number of improvements. However, this volume fills a need for a programmed manual that will (1) give a pastor guidance for himself, (2) help a pastor train a young minister, (3) serve as a basic how-to reference, and (4) provide a pastoral guide suited by design for Baptist Bible Fellowship churches.

More information, sample excerpts, and the manual itself are available at <http://ministersinstructionmanual.com>.



# Granite State church rolls with the punches

Gregg DiCecca with Keith Bassham

**T**he church used to be known in the area as Granite State Baptist Church, the “Granite State” part identifying with New Hampshire. But later when the church needed to push out to reach their community and others in New England, they decided to refer to themselves as Granite United with several congregations meeting on multiple campuses throughout the area.

Saying they will do whatever it takes, Granite United and Pastor Anthony Milas have planted four churches in nine years: Crossroads Baptist Church of Pelham, The Journey Baptist Church of Rochester, Dialogue Church of Manchester (all in New Hampshire), and New Heights Community Church of Haverhill, Massachusetts.

Meanwhile, as Granite invested into each church plant financially and through volunteers and leaders, Milas saw the mother church continue to grow. Trying to find a location to accommodate these new worshippers became more and more of a challenge. Additional Sunday services soon maxed out, but the vision of Granite United to reach New England had not changed. They decided they would no longer let their existing location determine the number of people they could reach for Christ and committed to becoming one church in multiple locations. A few months later, in February 2008, Granite United launched their second campus at a local movie theater.

Worshipping in two locations at the same time forced church leadership to focus on multiplying volunteer leaders at every level of the ministry, from worship teams, ushers, greeters, and campus pastors, but God blessed. In 2008, Granite United baptized over 50 believers and

saw many others begin their journey with Christ.

A year and a half later, the two Granite United campuses were experiencing the crunch for seats. Granite United had recently held its Easter service at a local middle school that had over 1,000 seats, allowing both campuses and all service times to meet for one large combined service. Later, they asked what would happen if they combined the two campuses and left their existing permanent location to become a completely portable church? Three months later, in July of 2009, Granite United Church did launch its newly combined, portable location at the Tenney Grammar School in Methuen, Massachusetts.

That year, Granite had over 100 people follow Christ in baptism, and they had a record-shattering Easter service. Creating a portable weekend worship experience for over 500 people in one service, Granite saw its volunteer ranks soar to over 300 people plugged into regular service. But this location was not without its own unique challenges: limited onsite parking, scheduling conflicts with some sporting events, and a very small but vocal group of local politicians who were not excited to have a church meeting at the school.

That dissatisfaction led to an “exile” order, and Granite was forced to rethink their vision, and they had to do it within 30 days. Over the next four weeks, hundreds of volunteers reworked their former Salem location to prepare for the worshippers that would be filling the hallways in just a matter of days. A brand new Resource Room, a newly built Café, and an expanded auditorium stage began to take shape and through many late nights and early mornings the renovations were ready for the relaunch of the Salem campus on September 5.

Today, Granite has added two Sunday

...him eating with tax collectors and other sinners, they asked his disciples, “Why does he eat with such scum?”



services and a completely new Saturday service with a second planned in the near future. When asked about the unplanned move, Pastor Milas replied that he “sees this as an opportunity to grow.” He is excited to be able to reach people never reached before by a Saturday service and thrilled that the Café, whose proceeds are “going to support Granite United’s feeding center in Korea run by BBFI missionary Brian Kim, are on target to send an additional \$15,000 this year.” In addition to partnering with the BBFI in supporting Pastor Kim, Granite has been able to enlarge their network of influence. Pastor Milas says, “We are now in a network of 15 to 20 churches (the majority of which are younger church plants). This has allowed us to partner in men’s and women’s conferences with nationally recognized speakers, training conferences, mentoring opportunities, sharing of resources, and even the sharing of worship teams.”

Pastor Milas is also hoping the school board will realize that the church has a right to rent their facilities. He says, “We want to keep that door open for future church planters, and maybe go back for Christmas.”

*Gregg DiCecca is the worship pastor of Granite United Church (Granite State Baptist Church).*





# HISTORY

# BAPTIST

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## LEWIS LUNSFORD — The wonderful boy

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Lewis Lunsford was one of the most distinguished and successful Baptist ministers of the 18th century. He was born about 1753 in Stafford County, Virginia. His youth was marked by the hardships and difficulties that accompany poverty. He was converted sometime during his teens and baptized through the ministry of William Fristoe. It is unknown when Lunsford preached his first sermon, but by the time he was 18, his fame as a preacher was already established.

Although deprived of a formal education, he possessed a superior mind and remarkable oratorical skills. His talents were so great he became known as “the wonderful boy.” Desiring to improve his preaching skills, he often studied by firelight late into the

night. Testimonies to Lunsford’s preaching skills provide one of the reasons for his popularity and influence. Robert Semple, pastor and historian, wrote, “Lunsford was a sure preacher. In his best strains he was more like an angel than a man. His voice, always harmonious, often seemed to be tuned by descending seraphs. His style and his manner were so sublime and so energetic that he was indeed like an ambassador of the skies, sent down to command all men everywhere to repent.” Henry Toler, a fellow pastor, said Lunsford “preached as if he would never preach again.”

In about 1774, at the age of 22, Lunsford began preaching in what is known as the Northern Neck of Virginia. His preaching produced results, both favorable and hostile. A minister of the established church preached a sermon identifying Lunsford with the madmen of Munster. He was arrested and found guilty of disturbing the peace. On another occasion, while preaching to about 700 people, a mob arrived armed with knives and clubs determined to silence the preacher and disperse his audience. Turmoil ensued. Lunsford retreated to a nearby house where his friends provided for his safety.

One of the ruffians considered himself an able debater and believed that if given the opportunity, he could defeat and vanquish Lunsford. He was allowed to enter the house and to speak with Lunsford, but when he left, he wore a new face. His friends asked him, “What happened?” He said, “I think you better talk with him yourselves.”

Lunsford, undeterred by his opponents, continued preaching the gospel with great success. He founded the Nomini, Morattico, and Wicomico churches. He became pas-

tor of Morattico where he would remain until his death. His ministry at Morattico was truly amazing. The church was founded in 1778 with 18 members. By 1790, it was the largest Baptist church in Virginia with a membership of 495. When you realize that Baptist churches in the 18th century had between five to ten times as many hearers as members, you can begin to grasp the extent of Lunsford’s ministry. For example, the First Baptist Church in Philadelphia reported they had 82 members and 700 hearers.

Lunsford also possessed the ability to minister to the wealthy and influential members of society. During a six-

**“No man was more beloved when living or more lamented when dead.”**

week period, he baptized four of the wealthiest and most influential families in Virginia. One of those converts was Robert Carter, considered the wealthiest man in Virginia.

If Lunsford’s success at Morattico had been the extent of his ministry, he would have been considered a great man, but his ministry extended far beyond his church. It is estimated that he traveled and preached more sermons than any other man in Virginia. His itinerant ministry carried him into Delaware. He made three preaching tours to Kentucky. He once traveled 120 miles in 50 successive hours to reach his meetings. Often he would rise from his sick bed to preach.

In 1793, the Dover Association was meeting only 18 miles from his home, and although he had been ill, he desired to meet with his brethren. He went and his health appeared so much improved he made extensive preaching appointments. He preached at the Association on Sunday. Before returning home, he fulfilled a preaching engagement on the following Tuesday at the Bruington Meetinghouse. After the service he developed a cold, and even though quite ill, he preached the following day commenting, “It may be improper to attempt to preach at this time; but as long as I have any strength remaining, I wish to preach the gospel of Christ.” He then preached what would be his last sermon from the text, “Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ.” He started toward home, but his condition continued to deteriorate. Forced to stop at the home of Mr. Gregory, he was immediately put to bed with every remedy applied, but to no avail. He fell asleep in the arms of Jesus on October 26, 1793. He was about 40 years old.

by Thomas Ray







# URBAN CURRENT

## Christmas changes everything

**B**ob, lanky, with a kind of “aw shucks” demeanor, coked his way through Columbia University in New York City. His father had died. He had to pay his mother’s mortgage while working his way through a rich kids’ school. To stay awake he did what was handy: cocaine. Despite the drugging, he did well. At 25 he was Mayor Koch’s labor relations director. He partied hard three to four days a week. More often than not he closed out Studio 54.

A bar fight, a trip to jail on Christmas Eve, a personal encounter with the Christ who transforms lives, set him on a new path. After a hiatus from New York, he came back. All his friends were making huge money living in huge houses. He was doing well but decided he could live on a little and use the rest for good causes. He would say later, “I have the gift of getting.”

Making good money...no, make that making big money, business brought him to Chicago. Not far from where he landed in the windy city was Cabrini Green, the most notorious housing project in the country — 15,000 people shoehorned into four blocks of mostly high-rise subsidized housing. It became a national symbol for all that was wrong with public housing. Bob recruited a bunch of his professional peers and these white businessmen sponsored teams forming the first inner-city Little League Chi-town had ever seen. They commandeered a patch of weeds, trash, and rats bordered on the east by the El tracks creating a field and organizing the league. It became the largest inner-city Little League in the country. That was 20 years ago. The games continue to this day. A few years later, because of his constant business trips and ongoing connections in New York City, he founded the Harlem Little League.

After moving to Chicago, Bob and his wife, Tina, became part of the Armitage family. I

asked him to share his testimony at our holiday service. He stood at the mic in the Christmas Eve candlelight. He captured his story in the following lines:

### *The Night Before Christmas*

*Twas my last night before Christmas without  
Jesus Christ,  
I just downed my first drink and I was feeling  
quite nice.*

*The presents were wrapped and packed in my  
car’s trunk,  
But they’d never get home, cause I’d get too  
drunk.*

*The club that I owned would be slower than  
night,  
They had churches to go to...and...candles to  
light.*

*Though our bar was jammed packed, I was just  
about broke,  
Sin wasn’t my problem, it must be the coke.*

*I had killed my own children and we’d ne’er hear  
their voice but,  
It didn’t matter, cause I... was ... pro ... choice.*

*So I’ll have one last party, there’s nothing to fear,  
It’s party time now, and I’ll just quit next year.*

*The following morning I woke up in jail,  
My “friends” too hung-over to show up with my  
bail.*

*The car sat still, parked, not driven one inch,  
I was no longer Santa, I had become the Grinch.*

*So I called an old number of the church in Times  
Square,*

*It was Christmas morning, so I knew they’d be  
there.*

*My old friend now a “Christian,” rushed down to  
the station.  
Then he gave all he had...for my emancipation.*

*I told him what happened, he told me of the  
Lord,  
And for once in my life, I did not get bored.*

*If his story were true, even I had a chance,  
no more lying thru life, by the seat of my pants.*

*God had come to the earth in the form of a babe,  
for my sins and yours, on the cross he would  
trade.*

*So we sold our old club and gave away all the  
gold,  
In return he had blessed us at least 1,000 fold.*

*For God so loved us, that He came down to  
earth,  
And tonight’s the night we give thanks for His  
birth.*

*So my brothers and sisters, we have nothing to  
fear,  
Now our lives are so full, it is Christmas all year.”*

*This is Christmas! Jesus came for Bob, for you,  
for me, and all those who still haven’t heard.*

*by Charles Lyons, Pastor  
Armitage Baptist Church,  
Chicago, Illinois  
charles.lyons@armitagechurch.org*





BAPTIST BIBLE COLLEGE

## Invest in future leaders



by Jim Edge | President | Baptist Bible College

Since my arrival on campus, my vision for the students has been to train a new generation of Christian leaders. I understand that many of our students will graduate from BBC to become youth pastors, children's workers, worship leaders, and serve in many other areas of specialization within the church and society. But the chances of that young man or woman remaining in the same position for a lifetime are minimal at best. While we spend a great deal of classroom time training in the specifics of specialized ministry models, as president, my vision is that our graduates be transformational leaders, no matter what their particular area of expertise might be.

Looking at the American scene, John Gardner, in his "Leadership Papers," pointed out that at the time the United States was formed it had a population of around three million. Out of that emerged perhaps six world-class leaders — Washington, Adams, Jefferson, Franklin, Madison, and Hamilton. Today, with a population of around 240 million, the U.S.A. might expect to have 80 times as many world-class leaders. But, he asks, where are they? (Arthur Levine, *When Dreams And Heroes Died* San Francisco/London: Jossey Bass Publishers, 1981)

At BBC we are deeply committed to the process of building world-class Christian leaders. Transitioning an institution like Baptist Bible College into a viable world-class Christian leadership-training center cannot be accomplished quickly. It must be done strategically, with careful planning and with the counsel of our trustees and other advisors. That is the track we are on and that is the process we are committed to accomplishing.

Even though Baptist Bible College, like many other educational institutions, is experiencing significant economic challenges, we continue to make significant progress toward our goals. I have seen ample evidence during my tenure at BBC that our Heavenly Father is more than a spectator to the financial "perfect storm" that we have faced. Instead, I have seen Him come through for us each time at just the right time to meet the many specific challenges. Often he has moved in the heart of a pastor, Christian businessman, or grateful alumni of our college.

As we move forward toward our vision of becoming a world-class Bible and leadership-training center, we welcome the partnership of those who share our vision. Education in general, and private education in particular, has been one of the key areas of inflation in recent years. Throughout this time we have remained diligently committed to see our tuition remain one of the best values in private quality Christian education in America. God has given us a specific vision for Baptist Bible College, and we are making progress toward our goals. But to remain on course, we need your help. Would you consider investing in the next generation of transformational Christian leaders?

I welcome your questions and concerns.

BOSTON BAPTIST COLLEGE

## Gifts to remember



by David Melton | President | Boston Baptist College

Dragging out the ornaments from last year and seeing the end of the calendar gets me thinking about the first Christmas gift I can remember. I was five or six and my grandmother gave me a basketball. She just wrapped it in wrapping paper — no box, no decoy. It still makes me smile — it was just what I wanted.

While I am remembering, I think I will sit here and wait for images from life at Boston Baptist College to come around from the year now almost completed.

I remember being in Cairo, Egypt, on a study trip. Dave Beauregard, our student body president, stood beside me at Cairo's "most important tourist site," the grave of missionary William Borden, in the heart of the world's largest Muslim city. "Only faith in Christ can explain such a life," reads Borden's gravestone. We were speechless. I don't think either of us will be the same again. "No Reserves. No Retreats. No Regrets." Dave puts that on the bottom of every email he sends me.

I remember seeing Joanne come back to campus in August and she was crying. I automatically presumed something bad was up. Then she told me how happy she was because this year she was going to get to live on campus! She was so excited! I know it had nothing to do with our buildings. Joanne's joy had everything to do with how good it is to have a college family that loves Jesus no-holds-barred. A good gift.

I remember a lecture in my course about the historical evidence for Jesus from last winter. We watched a DVD in which right in the middle of a frontal attack on the credibility of the New Testament is a 20-second clip of one of my old Harvard profs acknowledging that the Christology hymn in Philippians 2 simply has to be a product of Christians in the first decade after Jesus died. I kept rewinding it and watching it over again! At first my students thought I had finally fried all my cerebral wiring! Then they realized that it was a party — a truth party — and we laughed and cheered together. Rebekah was on the front row laughing. Another gift.

During 2010 I remember my last talk with Bro. Boyle before he graduated to heaven. I remember watching Ken Gillming cry preparing for a doctrine class because he was so moved by the greatness of God! I remember seeing one of our Haitian alumni, Jean Abel Jean, for the first time after he came back after the earthquake. I remember "Q" telling me about somebody he had just won to the Lord. I remember picking weeds with Ryan on the Walk of Light.

Sure, 2010 has given me a few headaches — mostly financial ones. But right now all the gifts have me smiling like Christmas morning. When a gift is good enough, sometimes you don't need a box. It is what it is. Merry Christmas everybody.



# BBC choir performs in Flint, Michigan

Flint, MI

Pastor David Chittenden and Great Lakes Baptist Temple hosted the Baptist Bible College Choir October 3 for Round-up Sunday. The choir, under the direction of David Giles, also performed in Hale and Taylor, Michigan, during the trip.

Chittenden says, "We had one saved on the Sunday morning they were here, and we also had a college-age young lady rededicate her life to the Lord Sun-

day night because of the wonderful testimony they demonstrated."



During the morning, the college students were divided to attend several classes. In the Sunday evening service, Pastor Chittenden reports, "Our folks shared what a blessing the choir and orchestra members were along with the fact that the music they brought to us really touched their hearts. Many of the members pitched in and helped in the activities of the afternoon and they will be long remembered around our church for their sweet, godly representation of Baptist Bible College and our Lord Jesus Christ."

## BBC grad school honors Houghton

Springfield, MO

The Baptist Bible College graduate faculty hosted a lunch to honor Myron Houghton for his 11 years of service to the graduate school. Staff, students, and friends attended. As a visiting faculty, he taught a theological module during each fall and spring semester. He joined the faculty at a crucial time when the college was working toward regional accreditation. An accredited college must meet a minimal standard in reference to the percentage of graduate faculty with terminal degrees. Employing Houghton was one

of several steps taken to meet the standard.

The testimony of those present confirmed that he was a great asset to Baptist Bible College. Several commented that his academic credentials and theological skills were demonstrated



From left: Bill Piatt, Stephen Schrader, Wayne Slusser, Myron Houghton, Arnie Smith, Kevin Carson, and Greg Christopher

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through his energetic, vibrant, and witty disposition. Fellow colleagues in the graduate school are thankful for his humility as a life-long learner. Consensus is that he has a great sense of humor, a friendly and approachable demeanor, and very much a godly character that is demonstrated by the fruit of the Spirit. His ability to make detailed knowledge of the Scriptures applicable is invaluable. "On a personal level, I am very grateful for the time and effort he has invested in my life through my doctoral studies," says Wayne Slusser, dean of the graduate school. Greg Christopher and his family have developed a close friendship with Houghton.

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# Brothers of Cyrene address students at IGNITE conf.

Springfield, MO

Representatives of the Brothers of Cyrene attended and participated in the IGNITE Conference held at Baptist Bible College October 14-16. The conference focused on reaching the different ethnic groups to include Native Americans, African Americans, and Hispanics.

Pastors and missionaries dedicated to each group shared their burdens and challenged the students to obey God's command to reach the world for Christ. Pastors Pararr Jones, Sam Mitchell, and Bill Fluker spoke to an assembly of students, faculty, and visitors. Pastor Ira Walton, moderator for the Brothers of Cyrene, led a discussion with students during two different breakout sessions with emphasis on reaching Black America for Christ.

Fluker said, "Wayne Guinn and the entire NPCO staff are commended for such a great conference and many thanks for inviting the Brothers of Cyrene."

The Brothers of Cyrene are a group of pastors and evangelists whose purpose is to plant strong independent Baptist churches in in-

ner cities, towns, communities, and neighborhoods with emphasis on reversing the downward trends found in marriages, education, drugs and crime, incarceration, and the high mortality rate. They can be reached at [www.brothersofcyrene.com](http://www.brothersofcyrene.com).



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Linda Fitzgerald | **Germany**

Years ago, I got to know Sylvia and her family through a Bible study before her MS advanced to the point that she couldn't communicate anymore. For the past five or six years, I have helped care for her while her husband has worked on building projects and renovations at our church. This month, Sylvia went home to be with her Lord. I smiled at the thought of her walking and talking, free from the bondage of her sickness. Still, I feel a loss, because I was with her a lot. Please pray for Glenn and Jessie, Sylvia's husband and daughter, as they go through the grief and transition.

Brian & Rachel Weed | **Nicaragua**

Jesus is the middle child out of 10. His father passed away when he was only seven and his mother did odd jobs to keep the family fed. When he was a teenager, his older brother invited him to church. Jesus purchased a Bible with the purpose of showing how wrong this "Christianity thing" was. In the end, God showed him how wrong he was. The military recruited him shortly after his salvation and his squadron leader prohibited him from reading the Bible. It was a hard, scary, and lonely time. During one of the battles, the house where he and 27 soldiers were hiding was raided and only a few walked away alive. He was one of them. He is no longer a military soldier. He is now a warrior in God's army, pastoring the church of Pueblo Nuevo.

Tim & Allison Stephens | **Cambodia**

We became acquainted with Kruey years ago, when his wife, Yon, began to occasionally attend our church with a neighbor. Kruey, 53, is a former Cambodian soldier who holds a low-level position of influence in his immediate community. Yon enjoyed coming to church, but Kruey would generally discourage it. He was not interested, nor particularly happy, when members of Faith Baptist would visit his home. Over the years, Tim and Pastor Sarorn visited in Kruey's neighborhood regularly, often stopping to see Yon and to invite Kruey to participate in a series of evangelistic Bible lessons. One day in June 2008, Kruey suddenly agreed. Each week, Tim and Sarorn would meet with him and methodically present the wonderful truth of the gospel. By the end of the lessons, Kruey was ready to accept God's offer of salvation through His Son, Jesus Christ. From that point on, Kruey was eager to learn more about the Lord. He was baptized and immediately began attending church faithfully, bringing with him various family members still living at home. Pastor Sarorn began to meet with him weekly for discipleship also. Most striking, however, was the immediate effect of the gospel in Kruey's life. Not long after his salvation, Tim was visiting in the home of an elderly housebound widow in that same neighborhood. She confided to Tim, "You know Kruey over there? He is so different now! He is not the same at all!" What compelling evidence of his new life in Christ. In Cambodia, it is quite common for people to say and to be what they think you want them to be, only to please you. But here was evidence that the change in Kruey's life was being lived out on a daily basis, not just in our presence.

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Jerry & Nancy Novak | **Kenya**

We had a great day in Kenya! During our service, we had a visitor by the name of Peter. He was probably in his late 30s and he seemed at ease and happy to be there. After church, while we were waiting for the baptism to begin, I had the chance to talk with Peter. He told me, "That sermon was preached just for me." He had been a missionary in Swaziland for some time, and had been severely hurt by people and had quit and come back home to Kenya. He said he had been unable to forgive and was just stuck. He was amazed at the way God guided the details and timing in his life, and said he had some things he needed to get straight with the Lord. When I told Jerry about our conversation later, our hearts were moved by God's interest and care for us as individuals. Jerry had struggled with that sermon, but it was just the right one for Peter. What a loving, powerful God we serve!

Andrew & Angie Even | **Chile**

Claudio and Teresa Lopez are two of MANNA's longtime faithful servants. They pastor the church and operate the MANNA center in Santiago. Teresa grew up in similar situations as many of our MANNA kids and has a tremendous burden for these children. Because of her difficult family background, she became aware a couple of years ago of a young teenage niece of hers that was drug addicted and living under a bridge. She had gotten pregnant and had her baby, Kevin, in those filthy conditions. He quickly became very sick and was taken from her and put in the hospital with serious health issues. On a visit to the hospital, Kevin's mother, just a child herself, kidnapped him from the hospital and took him back to the streets under the bridge in the middle of winter. There his severe respiratory problems worsened and he developed mange and became very malnourished. Claudio and Teresa's hearts broke when they saw Kevin's condition and they took him into their home even though they were very financially strapped and have three children of their own. Slowly, Kevin improved and began to recover and started to grow. He is a bundle of energy now and loves his new family as well as the church family.

Tim & Karen Burr | **Australia**

Ebony started coming to Sunday school on the bus after VBS in 2008. Last October, they found a tumor on her hip. Although the doctors were very concerned, it took five to six months to get an appointment to remove it and have a biopsy. During those months, her mum, Mel, started picking her daughter up from church and would stand around and talk with some of the ladies. She saw how the church reached out and accepted them. Ebony's biopsy came back fine, but we feel that God allowed this in their lives to soften Mel's heart. Mel asked Christ to come into her heart this summer. She also spent hours at the church painting and helping in preparation for VBS.

Joanne Foltz | **Tanzania**

Mariamamu is a young Islamic teen who came to Arusha to help a young mom with her kids. Mariamamu is quiet and very unassuming, but she is listening. She comes to church each Sunday with her employer and she is aware of what is happening. One Sunday at the invitation time, I leaned over to ask her if she understood the gospel. She says she does not understand yet and is not ready to make any decisions. Pray for Mariamamu that the Holy Spirit will convict her of her sin and help her to be open-eyed to the gospel of Jesus Christ. She is blinded by the religion of Islam and her parents have a hold on her loyalties.



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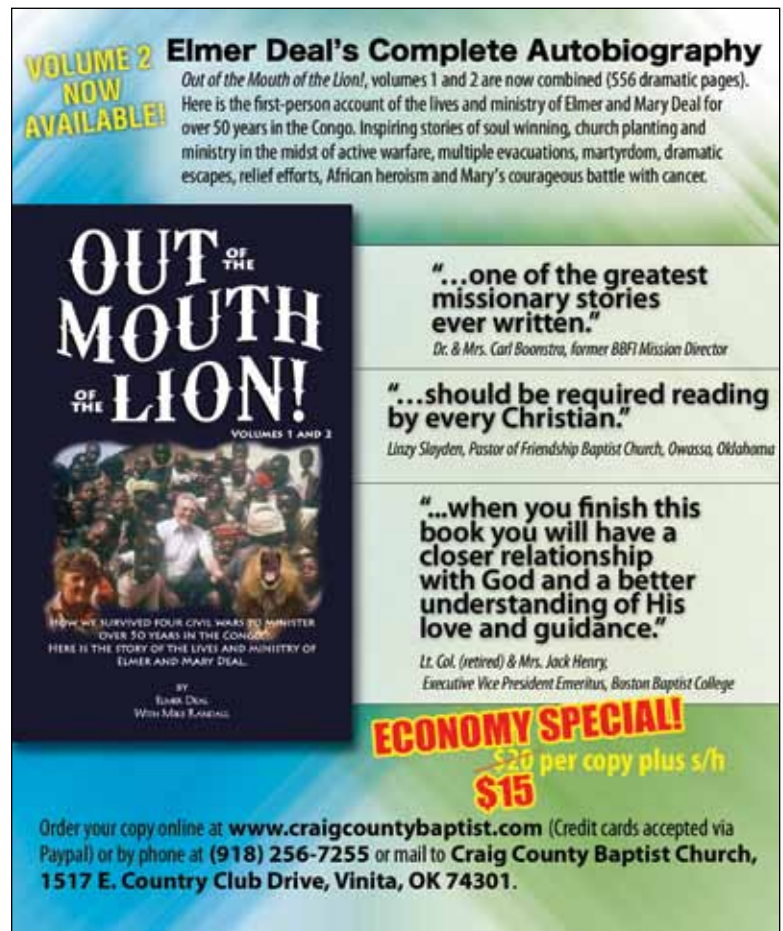
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## Steve & Kelli Mowery | **Spain**

I was able to sit down with Eduardo and explain his need for Christ. He was impressed under the conviction of the Holy Spirit, but resisted making a decision because he didn't want to give up some things in his life. I left it in God's hands. The next week, I called him to counsel him on some family problems and again appealed to him to get right with God. He called me the next day saying he had given his life to the Lord. Amen! The following week, his three-year-old daughter almost drowned. His reaction was one of peace and confidence in the Lord knowing that we are all in His hands.

## David & Karen Freeman | **Nepal**

Our summer started under quite difficult circumstances. An eight-year-old boy living in the children's home at our mission church in Bardia, western Nepal, died after a snake bit him. The snake entered the boy's room during the night looking to feed on rodents. The young boy was bitten while he slept. The nearest hospital was a two-hour jeep ride away. The boy died while in route to the hospital. It has been a challenging time for the church and their relationship to the Hindu community since this incident. However, the Lord has begun to work through this tragedy and many villagers have come to hear the gospel at the services as a result.

## Marvin & Rosalie Hooge | **Mexico**

Josue is one of our member's 15-year-old grandson. His mom and dad divorced and his mom went off the deep end and started living with a cartel man, then he went to jail and she became a part of the Santa Muerte cult. She and the boy's father had pretty much left Josue on his own and he had joined the Gulf cartel. When he found out how hard the life was, he called his mom crying and wanted to come home. She went to the boss of the cartel and asked him to release her son, but he said no. Then she tried again and he said, "Okay, I'll release him, but he has to get someone to take his place." His dad went to take his place, and then he found two other men to take his place and got out too. The cartel told Josue he was not to be seen in the streets of town or they would kill him. As a result of this, six people of the family have been saved this week. God brings victory out of ashes!

## Michael & Tammi Nelson | **Australia**

Wendy asked the question, "How do I join the team?" This simple question came after months of prayer and several spiritual conversations. Following a Sunday morning sermon on the gospel, Wendy finally understood that Jesus' love was something that she needed to personally accept. Michael had the joy of leading Wendy to the Lord that afternoon. The first statement that Wendy made following her salvation prayer was, "My family needs this too." Since that time, she has regularly attended church with her three children. Pray that Wendy's husband and children would all "join the team."

## Brian & Mychelle Garrison | **Peru**

It was a typical Sunday morning — rushing around getting ready for church, cleaning mouths and fixing hair for the little ones, and, of course, running a bit late. But this wasn't any other normal Sunday, it was our missions Sunday. We were hosting three of our missionaries and emphasizing personal evangelism on this very special day, and I was in a hurry to get there. On the way to church, we had to stop by the store to pick up a small gift for the missionaries. Being in a hurry, I just wanted to pay and go; however, the cashier didn't seem to appreciate my situation and wanted to chat. Realizing I wasn't from around here, he wanted to practice his English out on me. He then proceeded to tell me his life story, and slowly but surely I found myself in less of a hurry... God obviously had arranged this meeting. He introduced himself to me as Christian, "the Christian who doesn't believe in God." He told me that after his parents died when he was a kid, he lost his faith in God, to which I replied, "Maybe I can help you find it again." I am now praying he will contact me and that God would give me another opportunity to have an impact in his life.

## Jim & Sybil Eberhard | **Kenya**

A few weeks ago, Mwangi came to us in his suit and said, "I am going to the Baptist church today." After 30 years of attending a Catholic church near our home, our gardener decided to attend the Baptist church close by. He came home a changed man. He told Peter (Kenyan missionary to Tanzania that preached the service) that he believed but had not yet received Christ in his heart until today. Praise the Lord! We had witnessed to Mwangi many times over the last year, mostly in English, so when he heard the message in Swahili, he understood better and asked Christ to come into his heart. This is why we are continuing our language study in Swahili. We want to be able to communicate effectively in their language!

## Raquel Avila | **Peru**

Today at camp nine were baptized during the service. One of those baptized was Florentino, a camp worker who was saved several years ago through the devotions ministry of Amilcar. Florentino used to come to work drunk and create all kinds of havoc. Amilcar was patient with him and today we can see the results. He no longer gets drunk. He has learned to save his money and now provides for his family. In addition, he recently purchased a used truck to make money hauling large items for others, and he asked missionary Rudy Johnson to bless it. It has been a pleasure seeing this man's faith grow.

## Rickey & Angela Freeman | **Argentina**

Two months ago, a young girl started attending church and made a profession of faith. She asked prayer for her mom and explained that her mom was involved in witchcraft. She was what we would call a witch. Two weeks ago, her mom, Laura, came to church to find out who we were and why her daughter had changed for the better. After talking with Laura and giving her some study materials, she too made a profession of faith! Remember her in your prayers as she begins her new life in Christ.

# Family and friends celebrate Eli Harju's 90th birthday

Springfield, MO

The family and friends of Eli Harju held a 90th birthday tribute for him October 31 at High Street Baptist Church in Springfield, Missouri. Harju and his wife reside in Springfield after a lifetime of ministry.

Eli Harju enrolled at Baptist Bible College



in 1951 as both a student and a teacher having already served in the U.S. Army and graduated from the University of Michigan. He continued to teach at BBC until 1970 when he moved to California to pastor and to help staff Pacific Coast Baptist Bible College. In 1989, he returned to the Springfield faculty where he taught courses until his retirement from the classroom in 2001.

Thousands of preachers and Christian workers around the world have benefited from the ministry of Eli Harju, and many still do since he continues to minister as opportunities and health permit. The *Baptist Bible Tribune* published his biography in an article in 2001, and a copy is available on the *Tribune* website, [www.tribune.org](http://www.tribune.org).

## Trinity Village Baptist launched

Eastman, GA

Pastor Victor Baxter and Trinity Village Baptist Church launched with their first official services October 10. The launch climaxed months of deputation, groundwork, site locating, and other preparation for the church a little over an hour away from Macon.

In the weeks leading up to the launch, Victor had combined his deputation efforts with onsite evangelistic work in partnership with other churches who came to Eastman to help. Park Crest Baptist Church in

Springfield, Missouri, sent a group in August, and Brothers of Cyrene Pastor James Richardson, Victor's pastor, came to prepare for the first services. By the beginning of September, 35 people had accepted the Lord, and 130 attended a Back to School Rally.

The Eastman church is the product of a cooperation of local churches, the BBFI National Church Planting Office, and the Brothers of Cyrene.



From left: Phil Housely, Eligah Moore, and Victor Baxter.

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# Fourth annual Souped Up Saturday at Bible Baptist

Gulfport, MS

Bible Baptist Church and Pastor Jim Stady held their fourth annual Souped Up Saturday October 2. This "bridge event," as Stady calls it, is designed to share the gospel of Jesus Christ with hot rod car enthusiasts. Three hundred seventy-five hot rods were present (up from 288 last year) and a crowd of nearly 1,500 filled the church property to admire the vehicles. Numerous prizes and awards were given away to both the viewing public and the vehicle owners. The grand prizes were a new transmission and a new 350 small block Chevy engine.

During the event, Stady gave a devotional and over 30 people raised their hand to acknowledge their prayer for salvation. Eddie Klein, a

deacon of Bible Baptist and event coordinator said, "Our fourth annual Souped Up Saturday far surpassed all expectations — nearly 100 more hot rods than last year, quite an increase. We also had a huge turnout of spectators. Our property was buzzing with cars and people. What an incredible blessing!"

Bible Baptist invites all those who love hot rods/old cars to attend next year's Souped Up Saturday October 1, 2011.



From left: Pastor Stady, engine winner Mike Fountain, and Eddie Klein.



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# Event 3.35 marks big day for California church

Monrovia, CA

October 17, 2010, was a day of celebration at Calvary Road Baptist Church in Monrovia, California, when the congregation observed four anniversaries in the same day.

The church chose to use Mark 3:35 ("For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister, and mother.") as the theme for Event 3.35. The first anniversary celebrated was the 35th anniversary of the founding of the church. The second was the 35th anniversary of Pastor John and Pam Waldrip's wedding. Third was the 35th anniversary of Waldrip's call to the gospel ministry. Finally, the church also observed the 25th anniversary of Waldrip's installation as the pastor of the church.

Guest preacher for the day was Pastor R. D. Wade of Mesquite, Texas, and David Shook provided special music.

From left to right, R. D. Wade, John and Pam Waldrip, Leana and Pastor R. L. Hymers, Jr., and David Shook.



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## Howard Sears

Middletown, OH

Howard Sears, pastor of Grace Baptist Church in Middletown from 1947-1981, was taken by the Lord October 29 at the age of 95. His wife, Ethel, preceded him in death in 2006.



Sears was a native of Somerset, Kentucky. He came to know the Lord at the age of 24 while employed by the Crosley Radio Corporation. He enrolled in Bible Baptist Seminary in Fort Worth, and later moved to Middletown to pastor the congregation of 45 members. After his retirement from the pulpit in 1981, he continued a ministry of evangelism, and for a short period served as interim pastor. These past several years he taught a Sunday school class and preached as opportunities came.

Sears oversaw a church's growth from a storefront to a large and effective congregation with a global outreach while maintaining a humility that belied his success in the ministry.

A local newspaper, in a tribute published upon his death, quoted his statement from 1981: "As I look back, I just praise the Lord for what He has made possible and for the faithful, loyal group of people who have helped in any way possible all that's been accomplished."

Memorial services were held at Grace November 2. Roger Green is the pastor of Grace Baptist Church.

## Greg Preston

Cincinnati, OH

Gregory Scott Preston, former BBFI missionary to Panama (1998-2008), passed from this life October 31 at the age of 40. Memorial services were held at Faith Baptist Church in Beavercreek, Ohio, November 5.



## Jean Yates

Phoenix, AZ

Jean Yates, wife of BBFI pastor Charlie Yates, was taken to heaven November 5. Charlie wrote this:

*My Dear Friends - The Lord whispered "Peace Be Still" and ended the raging storm at 2:29 a.m. this morning. Jean Yates now has a new body, new home, new address. She donated her body to science. Her last instructions were "no tears, no funeral, and no flowers. If anyone wants to remember me they can send a donation to Native American Missions for my Indian preachers." She did it her way and we will honor her wishes.*

*Everything is fine with me. I will continue our work with Native America. If you should desire to honor her wishes and send an offering to NAMI (it certainly is not necessary to do so) you may send it to me at 1918 N. 103rd Lane, Avondale, AZ, 85392 or to Thomas Road Baptist Church, 5735 W. Thomas Road, Phoenix, AZ, 85031, with the notation "For NAMI in memory of Jean Yates".*



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*abolition of slavery, representative government, literacy, and the development of art and music — all find their roots in Christ and His teachings.*

As we began this series early in the year, I mentioned the writing of new atheists who not only say there is no God, but that believing in God is actually hurtful, and in the minds of some, dangerous and wicked. (You will also remember that we wondered then how you can deem some things good and some things evil without some form of moral authority such as God.) They often point out the foibles and faults of theists — religious wars, persecutions, hypocrisies, and even terrorist acts in the name of God. And much of the time, their harshest criticism comes down on Christianity.

Kennedy's work, *What if Jesus Had Never Been Born*, answers those critics. In the West, nearly all hospitals, orphanages, educational institutions, and other such works were begun by Christians as acts of charity. In politics, sci-

ence, and philosophy, Christians have historically been important figures. These facts do not prove the reality of God or the truth of Christianity, but, as Kennedy points out, it is truth that...

*...the message of Jesus has brought transformation and incalculable benefit to our temporal existence.*

*But as wonderful as Christ's profound impact on this world is, it is his transforming power in the lives of countless individuals down through time that is far greater still. The benefits in time of the Christian faith are far outweighed by the wonder of what He has done in providing eternal salvation to all who, by grace, place their faith in Him. Truly, Jesus Christ is a Savior to be celebrated in both time and eternity.*

The Baptist Bible Tribune wishes all our readers a very blessed and merry Christmas, with good reason.

# WORLD STAGE

...these facts do not prove the reality of God or the truth of Christianity, but...

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# The imperfect gift

By Eddie Lyons

Pastor, High Street Baptist Church, Springfield, MO

It was going to be a big day for us. Our youngest child, James, had been selected to throw out the first pitch to famed baseball player Albert Pujols of the St. Louis Cardinals. He had been selected because Albert was working with the local Down Syndrome Association, and James is a Down Syndrome kid.

We all wondered how he would do, but that day he was in his “play to the crowd” mood. When asked to, he walked off with the Cardinals officials to meet Albert Pujols. We could see him talking up a storm and pointing to his family all standing against the fence. Albert waved to us a couple of times, and then he asked James to “fire away.”

He ran all the way to the pitchers mound, waved to the cheering crowd, and then, with great confidence, wound up and threw the ball. The pitch didn’t quite make it to home plate, but Mr. Pujols ran, scooped it up off the grass, and went to congratulate James. He then signed the ball and handed it to James.

Being a good father, I immediately took the signed ball away from James for “safe keeping.” I bought the nice acrylic stand and proudly displayed it in my office at home. One Sunday evening when I came home from church, my other son, Robert, told me James had gone into my office and had taken the signed ball out of its case. Since Albert Pujols had signed the ball, James decided he should add his signature to my prized ball. My reaction was a mixture of anger, frustration, and great disappointment.

I had to do some emotional processing. After all, it was James’s ball. I had kind of hijacked it. It actually makes perfect sense to a little guy to sign a ball that already has a signature. Then I realized that while this ball may have lost some of its value, signed as it was by one of baseball’s all-time great players, it now told the whole story much better. It no longer would sit on my shelf as a perfect collectible, but in its imperfect state, its value was more personal now. It is the story of the great value of the imperfect.

Cindy and I chose the name James for our baby when he was born 14 years ago. There is something very classic and dignified about that name. Several American presidents wore the name. In the New Testament, James wrote one of my favorite books, and he was the half-brother of Jesus. It is a significant name. As parents, we dream of our sons growing up and doing something

of great significance, and we had our name ready.

On July 1, James was born. After the anesthesia from her surgery was wearing off, Cindy asked to see our little guy. The nurse brought him in and handed him to me. I held him up for Cindy to see. She stroked his forehead and then asked, “Eddie, is he okay?”

I assured her he was fine. Then she said, “He just doesn’t look like the other children.” I felt this dagger go through my heart. She saw something that I had not. Even as I tried to assure her that her fears were unfounded, I knew a mother’s intuition is something that is not to be ignored. They took James back to the nursery.

Later that day we had the moment with our doctor all parents pray will never come. The door opened, our pediatrician walked in. Her gait, her tone, her demeanor — all said something was wrong. She said James was doing well, and then came the pause — a pause that lasted forever. “The baby is doing well...but there is something we need to talk about. I think your baby has Down Syndrome.”

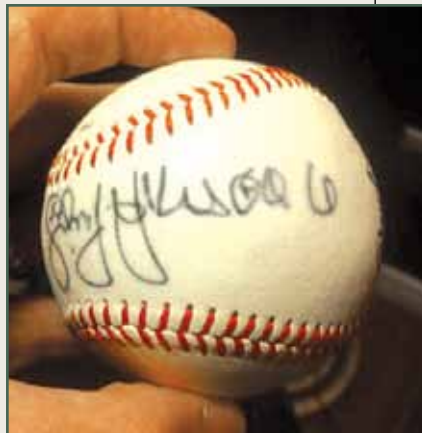
Our lives changed forever that day. Having a special needs child is a problem without resolution. The news brings a heaviness, a burden, a challenge, a set of life-long limitations, a fog of uncertainty that is never going to go away.

What we did not know, that we know now, is that special challenges come with special joys. Within this world of imperfection and struggle are some very fun times. The baseball with double signatures represents some of these great times. The truth is that God has and continues to teach me so many things through my special James.

I have learned that an infinite God does not just love the smart and perfect. As a father, my love for my children does not increase or decrease with their intelligence or talents. Likewise, God’s love is not contingent on perfection. None of us is perfect, but all of us are deeply valued and loved by God.

I have also learned that you can be both retarded (it took me a long time to accept that word in reference to my son) and smart at the same time. While we are all imperfect, we do have something to offer God and each other.

God has chosen the foolish things, the weak things, the base things and the despised things, “that no flesh should glory in His presence.” (1 Corinthians 1:27-29). And so the truth is that imperfect gifts are where God does some of His most amazing things. My son James is a living testament to this truth.



*Read more about James Lyons and his family at  
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Colossians 2:3,  
"In whom are hid all the  
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