

# PSYCHOLOGY FOR LIVING

NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 1998

**WHO IS THE  
MASTER OF  
CHRISTMAS?**

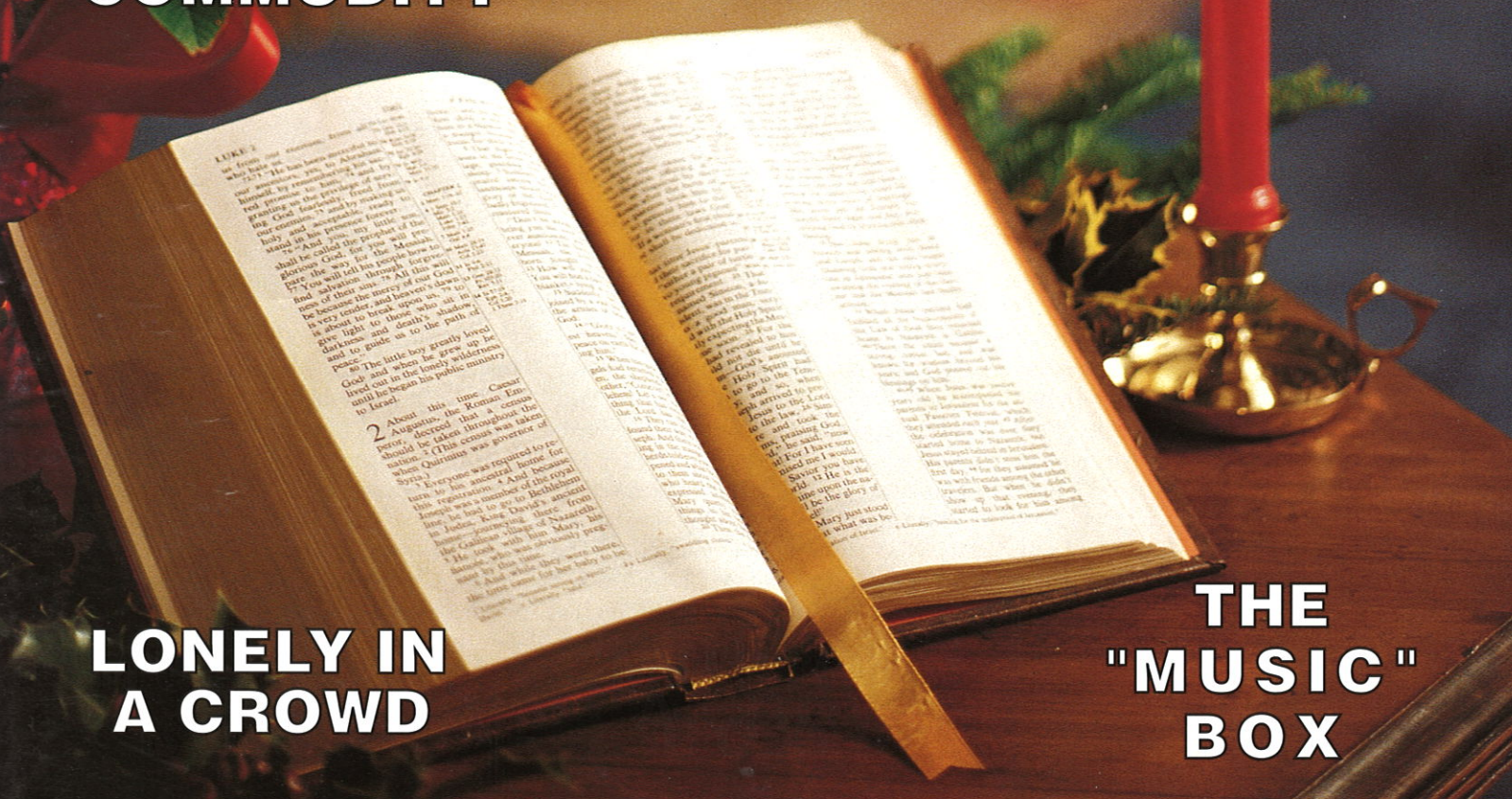
**LIGHTING  
CHRISTMAS  
CANDLES**

**THE  
CHRISTMAS  
HEARTH**

**GRATITUDE:  
A RARE BUT  
IMPORTANT  
COMMODITY**

**LONELY IN  
A CROWD**

**THE  
"MUSIC"  
BOX**





# A PERSONAL WORD



by Clyde M. Narramore



## CHRISTMASSES TO REMEMBER

**C**HRISTMAS IS SUCH A SPECIAL TIME that many people can look back and remember just what they were doing on a particular Christmas day. In addition to celebrating the birth of Christ, Christmas is a time for building memories.

My wife, Ruth, and I would like to share with you one or two of our Christmas memories.

**CLYDE:** The Christmases of my childhood were spent on a cattle ranch in Arizona. But Ruth, the Christmases of your early life were spent overseas.

**RUTH:** That's right. I was living in mainland China with my parents who were missionaries. Since China is a heathen nation, Christian holidays were not a part of its culture. Christmas meant nothing — it was just like any other day.

**CLYDE:** So how did you and your family celebrate Christmas?

**RUTH:** The first Christmas I remember was when Dr. Ting (pronounced Ding), a woman physician who had been educated in the U.S.A., asked my parents if she could take me from our little outlying village of Ting tze ku to Tientsin (now Tianjin) for a children's Christmas party at the Presbyterian hospital. It was there that I had my first encounter with Santa. I was two years old, and although my parents had told me the story of the Baby Jesus, I had no idea who this fellow was jumping around in a bright red suit. I wasn't too impressed.

**CLYDE:** So your family never emphasized Santa Claus?

**RUTH:** Not at all. It was always the birth of Christ. We sang Christmas carols and had special Christmas services with the Chinese Christians. We gave gifts to one another just as in America. We had a Christmas tree of sorts. Actually, it was a potted plant in our compound which we decorated with handmade paper chains and other homemade ornaments. To me it was beautiful.

**CLYDE:** I'd like to share about my first Christmas after you and I were married.

**RUTH:** I'll never forget that one!

**CLYDE:** We'd only been married about two months, and World War II had



ended about ten months earlier. As a Naval officer I received orders to go to Iceland and assume duty there, but dependents were not allowed. I knew almost nothing about Iceland so I began to read up on that tiny island country located in the Northeast Atlantic. I understood that we were going to Iceland to close the United States Naval Base in Reykjavik, and that it would take only a month or so. Little did I realize that I would be away from my new bride for nine months living among people about whom I knew very little.

The strangeness was modified, however, after I received a letter from a Christian businessman in America who had grown up in Iceland. He was an active member of the Gideons, and had written to several Gideon friends in Reykjavik asking them to contact me. A few days after receiving his letter, two young businessmen, both Gideons, visited me at the base. Before long we were having good times together. As Christmas approached I wondered just what I would be doing. We were told by the Navy that we would undoubtedly be home in the U.S. before Christmas. So in my letters to Ruth I kept telling her that I expected to spend Christmas with her.

But such was not the case. Not only were we still in Iceland for *Christmas*, we were there until the end of February!

But my new Christian friends in

Iceland did their best to cheer me and showed me much Christian love. In Iceland they celebrate Christmas for three days, so you can well imagine the different visits I had in the homes of Icelandic Christians during that Christmas season. We talked, read the Bible, sang, shared our testimonies, and had lots of wonderful Norwegian-type goodies to eat. God was good to me that first Christmas after we were married, in spite of the fact that I longed to be with my bride.

**RUTH:** That was a difficult Christmas for me. You kept writing that you hoped to be home, so I was really looking forward to that. I bought your gifts, wrapped them as beautifully as I could, decorated the tree and the house so that it would be absolutely lovely ... and then waited! And waited! You didn't make it home for Christmas. New Year's came and went, and the days dragged by one after another. Of course I was with my family and they were wonderful — but I missed you. Every day I thought it might be the day that you would come. But still you did not arrive.

Finally in late February you made it back to New York ... and home! There Christmas was still waiting for you. As you walked through the door, you were greeted by the colored lights and decorations of Christmas with your gifts still under the tree. The tree? Well, by then it was sagging, but you said it was beautiful! Best of all, we were together.

\*\*\*\*\*

Through the years, Ruth and I have never forgotten the importance of Christian fellowship at Christmastime. So we look to see who might be alone and invite those people to our home — both for Christmas Day and during the holiday season. We talk about why Christ came, sing the wonderful Christmas songs and enjoy Christmas goodies. In this way we help to build joyous Christmas memories — not just for ourselves, but for others!

*Clyde M. Narramore*



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The Narramore Christian Foundation is a non-profit faith organization dedicated to the prevention and solution of human problems. Dr. Clyde M. Narramore, founder and president, is a licensed Christian psychologist with a doctorate from Columbia University, New York.



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ON THE FOURTH THURSDAY of November, Americans all across our beautiful land will gather with family and friends to celebrate an annual feast — a day of *Thanksgiving*. The traditional menu consists of turkey and all the trimmings in commemoration of the original day of Thanksgiving when the Pilgrims gathered together for a feast of wild turkey — a bird which at that time was plentiful in northeastern America. Sometimes I hear people refer to this holiday as “Turkey Day,” but let’s make it clear that it is a day of *giving thanks* to God and in reality, has nothing to do with gobbling the gobbler.

It’s wonderful to have a day in which our nation collectively gives thanks to God for His goodness and care over us. Unfortunately, for many people it ends there. And for thousands more, it doesn’t even begin. Sadly, too many Americans have forgotten the enormous importance of gratitude. They expect a lot but are very thankful for all the blessings God showers upon them day after day, month

after month, and year after year. This is in direct disobedience to God’s instructions to the people He placed on this planet.

Over and over again we are exhorted in the Psalms and many other portions of Scripture to give thanks to the Lord. In Colossians 3:15b God commands us to “be thankful,” and in I Thessalonians 5:18 Paul writes, “In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.”

Approximately four weeks later is another very special celebration in which our thanks should abound — *Christmas!* This is a time for giving gifts and for giving thanks. I’m not talking about getting — I’m referring to the privilege of giving. It is indeed a privilege to be able to give; it’s one that many are denied. How grateful we should be when we are able to give. Truly, “it is more blessed to



## TO THINK ABOUT

by Ruth E. Narramore

give than to receive” (Acts 20:35).

Of course, the element of getting is also a part of the Christmas celebration. May it always be foremost in our minds that

the greatest gift of all time and eternity is the One who made Christmas. “God so loved the world that He gave His only Son...” (I John 3:16).

Christmas has become a time of exchanging gifts. Someone gives us a gift, and we give one in return. Often, when possible, people try to give a gift that is of similar value. But God gave us His Son, so what could we possibly give Him that would in any way balance the scale? We have nothing to give that could ever meet that criteria.

So what *can* we give Him? Christina Rossetti, an eighteenth century English poet, wrote a little poem often used in Sunday School Christmas programs but which is equally

appropriate any time and for everyone:

*What can I give Him  
Poor as I am?  
If I were a shepherd  
I'd give Him a lamb.  
If I were a wise man  
I'd do my part.  
What can I give Him?  
Give Him my heart!*

How right that is. Indeed, we can and *must* give Him ourselves. That’s all He really desires. God gives us His pure holy Son, and we in turn give Him our sinful selves. But that’s what God wants! He wants to take us with all our imperfections and wash us in His shed blood to make us holy like Himself. He wants to take us who are awaiting our sentence on Death Row and give us eternal life. What an exchange! A person is a fool who rejects such an offer.

Thankfulness is not only appropriate at Thanksgiving and Christmas, but all year through. Every day should be a day of gratitude and giving thanks. This includes the marvelous blessings of Christmas and all the other blessings God showers on us every day of the year! □

## WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING

### WANTS FAMILY TO BENEFIT

I would like to receive *Psychology For Living* at my home. I always listen to your show and the advice given is very helpful. I would like for my family to benefit from this helpful advice. Thank you for putting Christ first in your work.

Maribel Fox  
Brandon, Florida

### HELP CONTINUES FOR 20 YEARS

We continue to be helped through the many things we

learned at an NCF seminar almost 20 years ago. Thank you.  
M/M Albert Astle  
Pico Rivera, California

### YOU'RE THERE TO HELP ME FOCUS

I was listening to your program and was impressed by Dr. Narramore’s talk about handling teenagers. He also spoke of a magazine called *Psychology For Living*. I would be interested in receiving this magazine.

This letter cannot express the knowledge I have

received about my relationship in, for, and with God. I love you for showing me how I can grow in my faith and love. And in those times when I seem to forget, you’re there to give me encouragement and to help me get back in focus. Thank you for your love of Christ and for caring enough to help show others the way.

Mrs. Nancy Doyle  
Nanuet, New York

### Y2K BUG

Recently I read the article by Dr. Kevin Narramore on

Y2K. It (Y2K) has been the subject of a lot of discussion, even by the teacher of one of my third-grade grandsons! I copied the article for him to take to his teacher. People can become so frightened, but knowing our Lord and His Word can bring peace again to our hearts.

I always enjoy *Psychology for Living* and all the resource material from the Narramore Foundation. Thank you for making these blessings available.  
Barbara B. Sturgill  
Chilhowis, Virginia



# THE MASTER OF CHRISTMAS?



For many, the fat, jolly man with a white beard and red suit has become the primary symbol of Christmas.

by Gary R. Collins

**I**N 1897 A LITTLE GIRL WROTE to the *New York Sun* and asked if Santa Claus really existed. "Yes, Virginia," the newspaper editor replied in his now-famous editorial, "there is a Santa Claus!" In many respects and for many people, this fat, jolly man with a white beard and red suit has become the master symbol of Christmas.

Nobody knows for sure just how the Santa Claus legend got started, but it probably began with a Turkish bishop named Nicholas who lived in the A.D.

300s. Bishop Nicholas became famous for his generosity and kindness, especially to children, and during the Middle Ages he became the patron saint of schoolboys. Later the people of the Netherlands chose Saint Nicholas as the patron saint of Christmas, and each year in December a tall, thin man in bishop's robes and miter rides in procession into Dutch communities to be welcomed by the children. During the night of his birthday, Saint Nicholas, or Sinterklaas as the Dutch children like to call him, was

supposed to visit the homes of the children to leave presents and pick up the carrots and hay which had been left out for the saint's proverbial white horse.

When the Dutch settlers came to America in the 1600s, they brought the Saint Nicholas custom with them, and the British settlers quickly picked up the legends and festivities. It is not difficult to understand how English-speaking children took to the Dutch "Saint Nikolaas" or "Sinterklaas," pronouncing it "Santa Claus." As Santa's name changed, so did



his appearance. In America he ceased to be a tall, stately person; instead he began to look very much like the typical Dutch settler in the state of New York—a plump, jolly fellow with hat and knee breeches. In 1822 when Clement C. Moore wrote his now-famous poem, “A Visit from St. Nicholas,” we see Santa Claus as the familiar “jolly” old man with a round figure, twinkling eyes, white beard, a nose like a cherry, and a bag full of toys slung over his back.

The white horse had been replaced by “eight tiny reindeer” who were joined in the 1950s by a ninth reindeer named Rudolph, the creation of an advertising man at the Montgomery Ward Company in Chicago.

Santa Claus, more than anything else, has become the symbol of Christmas in the United States, Canada, Great Britain, Australia, and other English-speaking countries. **Might it be that in some homes, Santa Claus has almost taken on the characteristics of an idol?**

According to Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary, an idol is “an object of passionate devotion, an image or representation of a deity.” For many children, and in the fantasy thinking of some adults, Santa Claus fits this description perfectly. That he is an “object of passionate devotion” among many children is beyond dispute. That he is given divine characteristics is often forgotten. The following are a few of those qualities that rightly belong to God:

✱ **Santa Claus is the giver of good and perfect gifts.** Little children write him letters and come before him in department stores to let their requests be made known. All assume that Santa will bring many desirable presents.

✱ **Santa Claus is a source of great happiness.** He is a jolly man who laughs heartily. For many he is the greatest source of happiness. He personifies the widely held belief that real joy comes with the acquisition of material possessions.

✱ **Santa Claus is omniscient and omnipresent.** “He sees you when you’re sleeping. He knows when you’re awake. He knows if you’ve been bad or good....” This is how he determines the number of gifts to bring.

✱ **Santa Claus is omnipotent.** He is the only man in the world who can fly without mechanical help. He is pulled by a group of animals who, although they are not birds, can also fly. He is able to



## Christ, not Santa, belongs on the throne of Christmas

visit every home in the world within a few hours and has the ability to get in and out of those homes, laden with toys, even when there are no fireplaces and the doors are locked.

✱ **Santa Claus is a judge.** “He’s making a list, checking it twice,” seeking to know “who’s naughty and nice.” The rewards are given on the basis of works.

For vast numbers of children, even in Christian homes, the Babe of Bethlehem has been replaced by a jolly, fat idol with a red suit and white whiskers. In recent years Santa Claus has even been appearing in crèches along with the shepherds and wise men.

Realizing this, some Christian parents get carried away in their opposition to Santa Claus. They refuse to have pictures of him in their homes and they deny their children the fun of seeing Santa Claus as a happy symbol of Christmas. Santa Claus need not be eliminated, but he needs to be kept in his proper place—a jovial, *make-believe* symbol of the season, *not* the master of Christmas.

As everyone knows, Christmas is a time of sleigh bells and holly wreaths, colored lights and Christmas trees, snowmen and candy canes. None of this is wrong. These things contribute to the

wonder and excitement of Christmas. Even fantasy is desirable and healthy for little children. Sometimes, however, Christ, the true Master of Christmas, is replaced by these colorful holiday trappings. This is wrong! Since Santa Claus has become a pagan substitute for Christ, it is time that we dethroned him. The place to start is at home.

How do we dethrone Santa? Perhaps we should begin by telling children the truth. Few parents deliberately set out to deceive their children with stories about Santa Claus. We perpetuate the Santa Claus myth in order to make Christmas an even more exciting, happier time for youngsters, but this may backfire. Children sometimes are crushed when they discover the truth about Santa, and it is difficult for them to separate fact from fiction if we later tell them that Jesus is real while Santa is a fake.

But how do you explain to a four-year-old that there is no Santa Claus? The problem will be handled differently in different homes and with different children, but the following is one approach:

“Santa Claus is a man dressed up in funny Christmas clothes. Some children believe he brings presents, but the toys that appear on Christmas morning are really put there by Mommy and Daddy. Some little children don’t know that Santa Claus is just a man, but that is something that their own parents need to tell them, so we must keep this a secret in our own family.”

With this should come an emphasis on the real meaning of Christmas. “It is the birthday of Jesus, and because it is a birthday, we give presents.”

Even with this explanation, young children like to pretend about Santa Claus. Playing make-believe games can be fun, as long as everyone realizes that we are “just pretending.” Santa Claus is a delightful person, but he’s only a fantasy — not like Jesus who came and is the real Master of Christmas.

Is Christ the Master in your home? □

*Gary R. Collins, Ph.D., is president of the American Association of Christian Counselors and executive editor of CHRISTIAN COUNSELING TODAY magazine. He has an earned doctorate in clinical psychology. For the past 20 years he has served as professor of psychology and chairman of the Division of Pastoral Counseling and Psychology at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, Illinois.*



# THE "MUSIC" BOX

As we sang on the doorstep of the first home, something magical happened.

by Shirley Joy Higgins

IT WAS A LARGE ROOM. On one side under an alcove hung a short row of cupboards. For lack of appropriate hardware, the cupboard doors stood ajar. There was no "rhyme nor reason" for the kitchen layout. It was simply a large square having on the outside perimeters an old gas range, refrigerator, table and chairs, and a free-standing sink.

It was here, around the kitchen sink as we washed and dried the dishes, that we learned to harmonize. My brother Danny sang the lead, and my sister Diana and I sang the harmony.

Music had a way of softening our existence and of helping us escape the realities of our painful lives. It was here we lost ourselves in fun as we sang, "I've Been Workin' On The Railroad," "Carry Me Back To Old Virginny," and many other old favorites.

In fact, we got so good in our harmonizing that we sang while we worked, we sang when we played ball, we sang anytime and anywhere. Our neighbors and friends cheered us on.

It was Christmas! Dad was in the Army far away. Our house looked pretty sparse and there were few gifts to exchange. We managed to find an inexpensive Christmas tree and decorated it with balls, lights, and tinsel. We always thought our Christmas tree was the prettiest one in all the world. Snow was falling and the outdoors looked like a winter wonderland.

Then I got a brilliant idea! "Let's find a nice neighborhood and sing Christmas carols," I whispered. "Maybe the people will like us and give us some money." Diana and Danny's eyes lit up with interest. We hurriedly dressed in our heavy coats, leggings, scarves, and mittens and walked through the falling snow on that Christmas Eve to the specially chosen wealthy neighborhood. By the time we arrived there, we were so cold that we could hear each other's teeth chattering. But we didn't stop.



As we sang on the doorstep of the first home, something magical happened. The door opened and a man and his wife stood there smiling broadly at us. We smiled back and continued to sing. Before we knew it, they gave each of us some money, fruit, and Christmas candy. They invited us into their home and allowed us to warm our hands by the fireplace. We had never seen a fireplace before. What a treat this was for us!

I don't know if it was because the war softened the hearts of people or if perhaps the three of us looked almost angelic as we stood and sang at the front porch of house after house.... I only know that on that night, our pockets were full of money, and we carried home bags of fruit and candy and nuts.

It was Christmas morning! We were terribly excited. We could hardly wait for Mother to get up and gather around the Christmas tree. She gave each of us one gift; it was all she could afford. We opened them and thanked her.

But our thrill that Christmas was not what we received, but what we gave. Because Diana was the oldest, we gave her the privilege of bringing out of its hiding place a precious little box. She handed it to

Mother. Surprised, and wondering what this might be, Mother slowly opened the box.

We stood there, holding our breath. As she lifted the lid off of the box, she gasped. There inside were the dollars, quarters, dimes, and nickels that had been given to us. This was our "music" box. Mother was very pleased and visibly moved by our expression of love. Tears rolled down her face as she looked at each of us and said, "This is the best Christmas present I have ever received."

I never forgot that Christmas ... and neither did she. □

*Shirley Joy Higgins is on the staff of the Narramore Christian Foundation. She lives in LaVerne, California.*





# THE CHRISTMAS HEARTH

It is a time to extend the warmth of our personal hearth to those who are outside.

by Elizabeth R. Skoglund

LATE CHRISTMAS AFTERNOON the phone rang. The person on the other end of the phone spoke with a small voice consistent with her five years of age. "Everyone's angry with me," she said, with an obvious attempt to hold back her tears. "They think I'm not happy."

I remembered my most recent conversation with Karen's adoptive mother. Karen had been adopted a few months before Christmas. In their desire to help Karen adjust to their home, the adoptive family had put a great emphasis on Christmas. They planned to give Karen expensive gifts. They told her what a wonderful time she would have. They watched with eager anticipation to see how she would react.

In her loneliness and her desire to please her new family, Karen had slipped into a Christmas depression. For her the demand of Christmas was "Be happy!" It was a demand that removed any chance for happiness, since happiness is an illusive thing that dissipates when it is focused on. The result was a frantic phone call to me to find out what was the matter.

Predictably, the day *after* Christmas was a happy one for Karen. All expectations for her happiness were gone. She relaxed and began to enjoy some of the more pleasant memories of the season and, of course, the presents.

Both Thanksgiving and Christmas are perfect times for offering hospitality. They are full of potential for decorating and special holiday food. Furthermore, they abound with meaning, particularly for those of us who are committed Christians.

Yet Christmas depression, or holiday depression, is not limited to five-year-olds. Nor does it necessarily indicate pathology. Indeed, it can result from a myriad of causes. A bleak adult Christmas can occur because it seems that nothing can match the happier childhood holidays. Or unhappy holidays in childhood can predispose a person to feel that joy is not to be part of that person's adult experience.

For most of us, the amount of joy holidays bring varies from year to year. For myself, for example, Christmas in childhood was an experience that was difficult to duplicate as an adult. The anticipation of the arrival of aunts and uncles with their huge bags of mysteriously-shaped



parcels; the songs sung around the piano; the wonderful aroma of food cooking in the kitchen; the nativity scene which was carefully placed in the cotton that lay around the base of the tree — these combined to remind me in a deep, almost mystical way of the love of God.

Of course, not all people have had these wonderful traditions in their past that integrate childhood with adulthood in a positive way. Yet **all through our lives we build memories for the future.** We create traditions for ourselves and others. We provide memories.

For anyone, no matter how bleak or how wonderful the past, this Christmas can be the first year of positive traditions that will extend into the years ahead and that will provide a safety zone of hospitality for young and old alike. Build a memory for your children. Create a tradition for yourself. Establish a pattern of hospitality for others that will be a place of refuge from the cold darkness of the world outside the hearth.

I have experienced a great many different Christmases. Christmas has brought joy in a kind of rushed, busy way in the years when I've tried to be in two or more places in order to celebrate with those I love. It was infused with sorrow the year that a Christmas wreath and poinsettia plants were the tokens of warmth at my father's funeral rather than signs of festivity in a happy home. And after losing my mother and other close family members all in one year, the only way to survive at all that Christmas was to focus on others and provide Christmas for some foster children.

### Christmas Can't Be Cloned

No matter how hard we try to duplicate that perfect Christmas from the past, or produce a new, even more perfect one in the present, we usually can't. We ourselves are different each year. Our circumstances are different. Furthermore, whenever we focus on happiness we are sure to be disappointed, for trying to be happy is a sure way to lose that happiness.

There are some basic principles, however, that if followed can make the difference between a Christmas that epitomizes hospitality at its best and a Christmas that ends up being a catastrophe of exhaustion and depression. First of all, don't believe all the Ho! Ho! Ho! hype out there. Don't be discouraged if



### No Matter How Hard We Try To Duplicate That Perfect Christmas, each will be new.

the TV kitchens look marvelously neat and well equipped, while yours is a disaster. Don't believe that you are supposed to look rested after a day of battling the crowds in your local shopping mall. You can, however, ease the pressure by allowing yourself to use shortcuts.

**Consistent with not attempting the impossible is the need to simplify and make choices.** Don't try to do it all. This year my challenge was to simplify at Christmas. I had a last-minute writing job that I considered a very high priority. For the first time in my adult life I gave up my responsibility for the Christmas Eve celebration and handed it over to a friend, knowing that this year it would not be Swedish. We also cut down on the number of activities as well as the number of guests. Then at the last minute, my friend got sick.

As I rushed to the Swedish delicatessen at the last moment, simplify was my motto. This year some things could be left out. Ironically, in the middle of writing a book on hospitality, I didn't bake as much! I gave up some of my perfectionism. Store-bought cookies were mixed with home-baked ones. When the delicatessen was sold out of the traditional Swedish potato sausage, rather than trying to rush back the next day, I settled with some discomfort for a different kind of sausage. Perhaps as a result of simplifying and the consequent relaxation, I have rarely felt such warmth as I did in that small Christmas Eve gathering. I was more free to focus on people, which is, of course, the essence of true hospitality.

And I don't believe that since childhood I have been as aware of Christ and His birth on the day of that birth as I was that year. Simplifying meant time to think, to worship, and to share the love of Christ with others.

When it comes to a complicated, more extended period of hospitality like Christmas, organization is almost as critical as simplifying. Time, as well as activities and people, needs to be organized. You don't have to go to every function and attend every luncheon. Sometimes it's important to pick and choose. And don't forget that organizing time should also include setting time aside for yourself to let down and relax.

### Focus Beyond Yourself

Perhaps the biggest liability of major holidays like Christmas and Thanksgiving is the loneliness and depression they tend to create. Like the little girl at the beginning of this article, we try too hard to be happy. *Happiness* seems to be the demand of the season. Sometimes in our attempts to be happy we become totally selfish.

Children learn these things early in life. This year a young boy who had received an abundance of gifts for Christmas came into my office. Michael's gifts had been expensive, while his brother's had been less costly. For that reason Michael had received fewer gifts than his brother, but their gifts had been equal in value. Michael understood this. Yet as he counted his gifts and saw that his brother had gotten more, he began to pout. When the difference in value was explained to him, this child of ten chose not to understand — and his attitude paid off. Intimidated by accusations of unfairness, his parents quickly went out and bought him more gifts. Of course, then the other child felt bad. For Michael, Christmas is not a time to worship God, even though his parents are Christians. Christmas is not even a time to give. It is a time to get.

An obscure little book called *Sartor Resartus* by the English essayist Thomas Carlyle states that **if we reduce our expectations to zero, then anything above that zero mark becomes happiness.** If I expect few gifts, many gifts are an unexpected joy. If I expect to be alone, then a visitor produces happiness in me. If I focus on the happiness I can provide for others, then those good

(Continued on p. 15)



# LIGHTING CHRISTMAS CANDLES

How would you like a flock of chickens, a pig, and 50 coats for Christmas?

by Venus E. Bardanoue

**I** KNOW OUR CHILDREN have a hard time thinking of something to buy us for Christmas," I said to my husband. "We are like many grandparents who really have few needs."

Even though we were blessed and amply provided for, we knew this was not true of countless others in the world. Therefore, one year we decided to do something different. Several months before Christmas, we wrote our family and friends expressing our appreciation for all they had done for us in past years, but requesting that they do a "new thing" for the upcoming holiday season.

We said, "This year we are asking you to begin planning to make our next Christmas a special time for us and others. We are suggesting you give a gift in our name to a charity, person, organization, or any cause that you feel will help to meet a need in this world. Then send us a card telling what you did. We will open these messages on Christmas Eve, and we will hope that your gift, in our name, will 'light a candle' in a dark world."

Christmas came, and what joy we had as we opened many cards and letters under our tree! And what a variety of responses — as varied as the people who sent them!



Concrete blocks (actually money donated to buy them) were given to Habitat for Humanity in our name. A nine-year-old girl and a six-year-old boy each received a book through the *Reading Is Fundamental* program. Someone gave to a foundation to help battered women's shelters and promote educational programs on spouse abuse.

A flock of chickens and a "share" of a pig was another of our presents, given to a third-world family through the Heifer Project, International.

Our daughter knew of an East Indian missionary family of five who were studying in the United States and had many needs. Her church

was helping them, and our daughter joined others in donating many useful items to add to those the church was gathering.

A granddaughter's family had become acquainted with a couple who were returning to Japan as missionaries and gave them a donation for their work as our Christmas gift.

A friend knew of a seventy-year-old woman in Montana who has a ministry to those who are needy in her town, as well as to those on a nearby Indian reservation. The friend knew that she provided clothes for many, once taking 50 coats, 70 pairs of new shoes, and a truckload of frozen and canned food to the reser-



vation. She received a donation for her work in our name, too.

There were several gifts to buy meals for the homeless and needy on Christmas. One gift was to an organization that goes into homes of disadvantaged people and helps them develop skills that will aid them in handling their lives. At Christmas, they had a project in which they went into these homes with supplies and helped the families make cookies, rather than taking boxes of cookies already baked.

The idea of Christmas sharing inspired others who heard of it also. A group of my daughter's friends in another state became interested in our request and contributed clothes, toys, books, and other gifts to a safe house to be given to women and children who were living there on Christmas Day.

Christmas is over. We received no new slippers, no candy, cosmetics, or books, but the gifts we received warmed our hearts in a special way. We can think of a child with a new book; Japanese and East Indian people who will hear of the

Christmas Babe; a third world family who is rich with a flock of chickens and a pig; hurting women and children in a shelter who received Christmas gifts; a new home for a family; many people receiving holiday dinners, clothes, and food; and a family munching on cookies they baked themselves.

What a glorious Christmas it was! And what wonderful gifts we were given! Our Lord said, "I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for Me" (Matthew 25:40, NIV). The gifts were given in our name, but may He accept each of them as given in His name, too!

And next Christmas? After thinking about all the small candles burning in the darkness this past holiday, how could we ask for anything else but more candles! □

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*Venus Bardanouve is a retired speech pathologist and audiologist. She and her husband live in Harlem, Montana.*

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# GRATITUDE:

## A RARE BUT IMPORTANT COMMODITY

Learn to be grateful. You'll be happier and so will everyone around you.

by *Vernon C. Lyons*

**H**OW GRATEFUL ARE YOU? Do you express appreciation and put your thankfulness into words?

Or are you one of those unpleasant people who thinks "the world owes you a living" and everything else to boot? If you are a chronic complainer, you are to be pitied because no one will care for your company.

A person of good character is full of gratitude. He is so full of thankfulness that there is no room for murmuring, complaining, discontent, or self-pity. His heart overflows with praise and appreciation to God for all His gifts, and to others for every kindness that is shown.

A humble person is always grateful. Since he expects nothing, he is thankful for all he receives. An egotist is forever discontented and ungrateful. No one gives him enough, does enough for him, speaks well enough of him, or agrees with his high view of himself.

Gratitude is a rare commodity. Jesus



healed ten lepers (Luke 17:11-19), but only one was thankful. The percentage may be worse among us.

Paul wrote in I Corinthians 4:7, "For who makes you different from anyone else? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not?" Since we are dependent on God and others for everything, we ought to be humble, and we surely ought to be grateful.

Throughout each day literally hundreds of people help us, show us kind-

ness, and do good to us. We should be constantly expressing appreciation. Since no one owes me anything, I owe everyone appreciation.

When last did you write a note expressing your gratitude? When last did you make a phone call thanking someone for a favor?

Do not worry about what to be thankful for. Just be grateful for every person who comes into your life, every experience you have, everything you

possess, and you will be on the right track. You will then be obeying the Scripture which says, "In everything give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you" (I Thessalonians 5:18).

So learn to be a grateful person. You'll be happier and so will everyone around you. □

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*Rev. Vernon C. Lyons has been senior pastor of the Ashburn Baptist Church in Chicago, Illinois, since 1951. Through the years he has also had a ministry in writing, radio, and television.*



# LONELY IN A CROWD

A first-person account of a woman who can never just “enjoy life” without striving to survive in a hearing world.

by Kathryn Bakke

**H**ow can a person be lonely in a crowd? This is what happens when a person sees life going on all around, but lacks the information to join in — because he or she is unable to hear.

**The world loses when it is deprived of a hard-of-hearing person's contribution** because of lack of equipment or understanding from other people. The constant loneliness and related stress for hard-of-hearing people who must live in this “glass house” of restricted contact is very damaging to relationships — social, familial, and professional.

Today I share my own story in the hopes that others will begin to understand the loneliness endured by those who must struggle with a hearing disability.

I am a concert pianist and composer — but I am also profoundly hard-of-hearing. For 20 years I have fought seemingly insurmountable barriers to continue my musical activities, and have endured all the other problems any person with hearing loss faces. I have a passion to be a role model for people with hearing loss by being the best pianist and composer I can be. Too many give up a profession and social life and withdraw permanently. I chose to persevere.

As an advocate for people with hearing loss, I have adamantly refused to hide my handicap. I see the crippling result, socially and professionally, when hard-of-hearing people attempt to conceal it. They may seek an invisible hearing aid, pretend to hear something when they don't, or even do most of the talking to avoid the stress of listening.

From infancy, I have had a partial hearing loss in my right ear. So when my second major hearing loss occurred suddenly, in the middle of the night, I awoke to seemingly no sound at all! Ninety percent of the hearing in my good left ear was gone.

Devastated, I felt alone, terrified, and out of touch with the whole world. I was accustomed to discussing my hearing loss and to accommodate it in various ways. But nothing had prepared me for the trauma I experienced when I lost most of the hearing in my remaining good ear. I feared losing my profession as a piano performer and teacher. I experienced an over-



whelming loss of not being in touch with people because of my inability to interact with them.

But hardship teaches valuable lessons. I'd like to share three of them which I hope will help others in interacting with those who struggle with hearing loss.

1. **Hard-of-hearing people are often starved for humor** which is an “escape valve” in daily living.

Those with normal hearing may not consider it worthwhile to repeat trivia (a valuable source of light relief) or to go through a joke twice. People are usually willing to repeat topics like how the weather will be (95 degrees and 100 percent humidity for the next three weeks) and one who has died. But these are not sources of healing humor!

The subtleties of what a humorous story is saying are not repeated, much to the disappointment of a hard-of-hearing person.

2. **God gives the needed help.**

I am often asked, “How are you able to be a concert pianist in view of your hearing loss?”

The answer is that God gives me people who are in the right place at the right time and technology that fills in for my lacks. Some of my blessings include:

❖ A piano teacher who believed in me and helped me learn to overcome challenges.

❖ A family who encouraged me and supported my commitment to continue my music career, working with me creatively and flexibly.

❖ Low and high tech solutions, such as my auditory trainer who has helped me hear at a class, convention, or social event; and people who point a microphone at the speaker so I know whose mouth to watch.

❖ A resolve and ability to rise above my hearing challenge, plus people who listen and act upon what I need professionally and socially to continue a normal life.

Although I have learned a lot about handling my hearing loss, it is never easy. Sometimes I am overwhelmed by the

(Continued on p. 15)



by Kevin Narramore



## TARGET AMERICA--THE NEW TERRORISM

**C**HRISTMAS IS, AND SHOULD BE, a time of rejoicing. Yet, the biblical record tells us that along with the splendor of the angelic host and the dazzling star, this marvelous event had a sobering downside: the birth of King Jesus was followed by a time of state-sponsored terrorism. In an effort to eliminate any competition from the newborn King, Herod (the ruler at that time) issued a decree to murder all the children in the land under the age of two.

Are we shocked by this sort of savagery? Is this really any less savage than the murder of many millions of helpless, unborn infants in this country over the past 25 years?

It's not a comforting thought, but our corrupt world is swiftly moving beyond the murder of babies to also target the masses. Although it is almost unimaginable, experts say that in the near future the feeling of being safe from terrorism will be a thing of the past.

**Scenario:** A mist of anthrax germs designed to cause a terrible death within five days to anyone who breathes it, is released in a sports arena in a midwest town on the Fourth of July. Initially, victims may think there is a flu epidemic. But in a few days their lungs fill with fluid and their symptoms greatly worsen. Soon the Centers for Disease Control announces that a terrorist attack has transpired but please stay calm.

Germ warfare is just one of many scenarios being discussed by dozens of federal agencies such as FEMA, the FBI, city managers, police, and fire chiefs. Other terrorist scenarios include discussions about nuclear proliferation.

Alexander Lebed, Russia's former national security chief, caused a lot of international defense ministers to lose sleep when he stated that up to 100 mininuclear weapons or "suitcase bombs" designed for Soviet special forces, were *missing*. Although there have been loud public denials in Moscow and Washington, there are those who feel that some of those suitcase bombs are in the hands of terrorists who wish to use them on the

world's favorite target — America.

Another form of unconventional terrorism which looms is the *cyberattack*. On a visit to Annapolis Naval Academy last May, President Clinton warned the midshipmen that America's "adversaries may attempt cyberattacks against our critical military systems and our economic base." With the tremendous haste to find Y2K programmers to do remedial programming, the *Wall Street Journal* has speculated that cyberterrorists who, under the guise of Y2K repair work, may gain access to computer systems and leave electronic "back doors" open to future system entrance and sabotage.

### Are There Any Terrorism Mega-trends?

According to Bruce Hoffman, director of the Center for the Study of Terrorism at St. Andrews University in Scotland, the total number of incidents of terrorism are on the decrease while the intensity, savagery and decentralization of incidents are increasing.

In the days of "old terrorism," political movements such as the PLO, the ANC, or IRA identified symbolic targets in order to make their point while keeping "civilian" casualties to a minimum. By contrast, the "new terrorism" may have no strategic plan for taking political power, but instead wants to inflict annihilation on the maximum number of people possible. An example of this would be the World Trade Center bombing in New York. While the incident claimed just six lives, the FBI investigators later learned that the foreign terrorists had intended to cause one tower to collapse and fall on the other in order to kill up to 250,000 Americans!

### Who Are These People Who Hate Us So?

As you might guess, the terrorist's way of thinking is vastly different from yours and mine. A trip inside the mind of a terrorist is a dark and appalling journey which starts in childhood.

Many terrorists have grown up in chaotic, violent, addictive, non-Christian homes. Their parents did NOT act con-

sistently or reliably. (One parent may have been doting and overly permissive while the other was harsh and abusive — or absent.) For this person, controlling others is a way to recreate certainty and predictability. The anxiety of feeling POWERLESS is therefore intolerable. This need for control can motivate the terrorist to do destructive things in order to teach authority figures a lesson and thus regain the one-up position. The urge to demonstrate power through violence is exacerbated when a person perceives few or no alternatives other than the use of destructive force in order to gain attention.

*Terrorists are also very ANGRY people.* One psychologist explains that the sensation of anger is the sum of three interrelated emotions: deprivation, imposition, and futility. *Deprivation* says, "I did not get what I was entitled to"; *imposition* says, "I was forced to do something I didn't want to do"; and *futility* says, "I am never permitted to act on my own to achieve what I want."

Anger is a very seductive emotion because it is profoundly energizing and exhilarating. Anger, unchecked, wants to avenge past wrongs by punishing others. This is one basis for justifying acts of terrorism.

Another justification is errant religion. In February of 1998, Saudi multibillionaire and terrorist, Osama Bin Ladin, along with a coalition of Islamic extremist groups issued a *fatwa*, or religious ruling, saying that "to kill Americans and their allies — civilian and military — is an individual duty for every Muslim in any country where it is possible to do it."

Whether it is Islamic extremists or a few religious nuts, errant religious teachings have been used to justify the implementation of terror since antiquity. Be it the Crusades, the kamikazes of World War II, Jonestown, Michigan Militia, abortion bombers, or the Hezbollah — obeying God's supposed "mandate and invoking His blessing" is a way for the terrorists to justify the use of violence by taking the so-called "moral high ground."

(Continued on p. 15)



## Lonely *(continued from p. 12)*

realization that I will never be able to just enjoy life without considering how to survive in a normal hearing world. Through this experience I have learned to trust God more. I have also discovered who my real friends are and have come to the place where I allow them to help me. There is humility in the knowledge that I often need other people's help, and that no matter how much technology is available, it is only as helpful as the person using it.

### **3. People with hearing loss who ask for help are paving the way for others to follow.**

The most valuable lesson of all may be, I do no one a favor by keeping silent about my needs. It is not just I who will benefit if a motel is told of the need for a hearing aid compatible phone or closed caption television. Nor am I the only one helped by real-time captioning, loops, and FM systems in churches, meeting rooms, auditoriums, and convention centers.

I have learned that in asking for help, I am in the front line of many hard-of-hearing people, easing the way to follow. □

*Kathryn Bakke is a profoundly hard-of-hearing concert pianist and performs widely as a piano soloist. She is also an experienced speaker and gives seminars, workshops and keynote speeches on hearing and on music-related topics. She is married and the mother of two grown children. Mrs. Bakke lives with her husband in Eagan, Minnesota. (From FAITH AND FELLOWSHIP. Used by permission.)*

## Christmas Hearth *(Continued from p. 9)*

things that people do for me will be unexpected and joyful.

Many people are intense about having the perfect Christmas, as though it were an inherent right. Consistent with that emphasis, they resent anyone who threatens to spoil that expectation. The ill, the poor, the aged, the unlikeable are shunned lest they spoil Christmas. Yet Christmas is spoiled before it starts by expectations that are impossible to fulfill.

Christmas is a time to do special things for people we love. It is a time for building and enjoying traditions that in the long run, bind families and friends together. It is a time for expressions of love. It is an occasion for festive decorations and bright lights. It is a time to extend the warmth of our own personal hearth to those who are outside in the cold.

Above all, Christmas is a time to remember that the greatest gift this earth has ever received was given in a stable built to house animals, in a town with no room for the King of kings! □

*Elizabeth R. Skoglund is a licensed marriage, child, and family counselor in private practice in Burbank, California. She is also the author of 26 books and numerous magazine and newspaper articles.*

## Making A Difference *(Continued from p. 13)*

Perhaps the most incendiary and deeply-rooted activator of terrorism is the ego-investment human beings spend to protect their own sense of identity. On a macrolevel, nations relate identity to things such as land ownership, cultural traditions, and prosperity. Many Palestinians, for example, hate the Israelis because they feel their land was taken away from them. On a microlevel, one's sense of identity often relates to feeling that one belongs, is self-sufficient, and sexually adequate. Many ter-

rorists are activated toward violence on an emotional, subconscious level because America's mighty army is big and powerful and they feel small and impotent. A terrorist who is socially and economically marginalized may for the first time feel accepted by his "family" of fellow terrorists. This sense of identity is a powerful psychological force which cannot be underestimated.

### **Preparing for Provocation**

It has been suggested that the odds of you or me being injured by a terrorist attack are probably similar to that of being struck and killed by lightning. Nevertheless, Franklin D. Roosevelt said it well when he remarked, "We have nothing to fear but fear itself." Because the threat of terrorist attacks will eventually be announced ad nauseam by the media, it is reasonable to presume that fear and anxiety will needlessly grip the lives of many. Traumatologists call this reaction "secondary victimization." Ironically, the very dynamics that drive terrorists to action are the same ones which foster traumatization among the citizens they wish to injure.

To combat feelings of powerlessness, remember that the news media generally tell things worse than they really are. Even if terrorism increases five-fold in America, it will not be the end of the world. Citizens of Israel, for example, have learned how to live under the worst imaginable conditions including Scud missile attacks. The Irish and English have dealt with regular car bombings and it is not the end of the world. Learn not to overreact because getting bent out of shape doesn't help.

Anger and rage are emotions experienced by both terrorist and victim. Many trauma victims have problems with cynicism, hostility, and irritability, and find it difficult to tolerate disquieting emotions. Vietnam veterans who have been traumatized, for example, often fear losing their temper because it takes very little to "light their fuse." For this reason angry people sometimes withdraw and isolate themselves from others as a form of protection from blowing up. The use of alcohol and other drugs, however, can become a trigger for aggressive behavior, and those who are normally peace-loving people can become like monsters. While the Lord says that "vengeance is Mine" (Romans 12:19) it is often hard to submit to this authority when an angry person feels so entitled to his emotion. How well you and I know this!

Difficulty connecting with God may be one of many spiritual disconnects for the person who is troubled by the act or threat of terrorism. In the book of James, chapter 1, verses 2-4, we find that suffering can actually be a means of blessing: "Count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that *the testing of your faith produces patience*. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing." And in John 10:28 we read that we are safe and that no one can pluck God's children out of His hand. If we really understood and accepted our security in Christ, it would transform the very worst victim from a survivor to a thriver.

While you and I need to be alert to domestic terrorism, most importantly we need to understand the times and rejoice that we are on God's side, the winning side, and that our redemption as Christians is coming soon! □

*Kevin Narramore, Ph.D., is on the staff of the Narramore Christian Foundation.*



# HEALTH WATCH

by Eva Hallam Solberg

## FERRET BITES

Ferret fanciers may not realize that these long-bodied furry critters can be dangerous, especially to babies and young children. Ferret attacks have left youngsters with serious bites and deep lacerations. Anyone bitten by a ferret should receive rabies prophylaxis as a precaution since not all states require rabies vaccinations for ferrets, and the disease is not well understood in this species. Although the Humane Society discourages ferrets as pets, it's estimated that more than 500,000 households have them.

(Health News)

## KEEP FRESH LONGER

To keep fruits and vegetables fresh for a longer period of time, place an Extra Life disk in your refrigerator bin.

The three-inch disk contains USDA-approved granules that absorb ethylene gas, the ripening agent released by fruits and vegetables. When ethylene accumulates in the crisper, produce wilts and rots more quickly. Although the compounds in the disks are commercially used to slow ripening, and as yet have not been tested for home use, they should also be effective there. The disks sell for about \$4 each and usually last for around three months.

(U.S. Berkley Wellness Letter)

## HEART DISEASE LINKED TO DEPRESSION

According to the findings of a long-term study at Johns Hopkins University, men who have suffered bouts of clinical depression are more than twice as likely to develop

heart disease as those who have not.

Researchers who had followed their subjects for as long as four decades, discovered that about 12 percent of the 1,190 male medical students in the study who had previously suffered clinically-diagnosed depression, were 2.12 times as likely to develop heart disease as those who had been free of depression.

The study appeared in the *Archives of Internal Medicine*, a journal published by the American Medical Association.

(Los Angeles Times)

## EXERCISE IMPROVES SWALLOWING

A simple exercise may help some people suffering from strokes, Parkinson's disease, or cancer, who have trouble

swallowing normally and keeping food or liquids from getting into their lungs.

The exercise developed by a dysphagia specialist at the Medical College of Wisconsin is as follows: Stretch out on the floor, face up, with your arms at your sides. Keeping your feet, back, and shoulders down, raise your head until you can see your toes, pause, then lower your head again. Do this 30 times. Take a break for one minute. Then raise your head and look at your feet for a minute, take a break for a minute, and repeat the long look and long rest twice more. Repeat this sequence three times a day.

This strengthens muscles that open the "gate" and allows food or drink to slide down the esophagus.

(Health News)



## Living Memorials



### My Gift of Love

#### TO HONOR THE MEMORY OF: PRESENTED BY:

Herman Funk  
Herman Funk  
Herman Funk  
Caroline Stauter  
A. Ruth Smoll  
A. Ruth Smoll  
Virginia Weber  
Virginia Weber

Grace Funk  
Miriam Nau  
Priscilla J. Walton  
Randy and Cheryl Stauter  
Grace Funk  
Clyde and Ruth Narramore  
Grace Funk  
Priscilla J. Walton

(Gifts received after September 21, 1998, will appear in the January/February 1999 issue of PSYCHOLOGY FOR LIVING.)

In Memory of:

Amount \_\_\_\_\_

Given by:

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Mail to:

NARRAMORE CHRISTIAN FOUNDATION  
P.O. Box 661900, Arcadia, CA 91066-1900

Send acknowledgement to:

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

## COMING NEXT ISSUE

- \* The Problem of MK In Vulnerability
- \* Nothing But The Truth
- \* First and Last Thoughts
- \* Year of the Dog
- \* The Handicapped: Ministering To Their Abilities
- \* The Son Can Set You Free



by Clyde M. Narramore

## IS INGRATITUDE A CHARACTER FLAW?

### QUESTION:

*I teach in a private high school where most of the students are from secular, well-to-do homes. What bothers me is their attitude toward things. They have almost everything you could imagine, but act as if it is their right, not a privilege. They drive expensive high-powered foreign cars and have the latest of everything in computer technology. Most of their extravagant "toys" are given to them by their parents, but they are not a grateful lot. They continually complain because it wasn't something they considered to be better. When I talk to them about the importance of gratitude, they react as though I'm from the Dark Ages.*

*I see this as a serious character flaw. What do you think?*

### DISCUSSION:

You are absolutely right. Ingratitude is indeed a "serious character flaw." Just plain good manners demands that people express appreciation when they receive any kind of gift or favor. From what you have described, it appears that these young people have never been taught to be appreciative. While bestowing all kinds of gifts on their children, apparently their parents neglected to teach them the importance of showing gratitude. However, it is never too late to learn.

But this is a problem not only of the rich, but of everyone. Ingratitude can affect young and old, rich and poor.

There is also the possibility that while the parents of these young people showered them with "things," they failed to give of themselves. Unfortunately, elaborate gifts can never replace the love that comes across from giving of oneself in time and effort and togetherness. It's hard for a child to feel grateful for fancy gadgets and money spent when what he really needs and wants are parents with whom he can feel closeness and genuine love. And these feelings carry over into adulthood.

As a teacher, you may not be able to undo the damage done by parents who are not teaching their children gratefulness, **but you can be an influence.** You can drop remarks that may help to get the message across. Part of becoming a mature adult is learning to accept the responsibility of *speaking* one's appreciation in addition to doing thoughtful things for others as a way of *showing* his or her own appreciation.

From what you say, it does not sound like these young people are Christians. This makes a big difference. Christians who read God's Word know that God expects them to show gratitude. Over and over the Scriptures tell us that we are to be thankful. In fact, the word *thanks* in its various forms is mentioned in the Bible 138 times.

The theme of giving thanks runs all through the Bible, even in Revelation. (See Revelation 4:9; 7:12; and 11:17.) Thankfulness is not an option. We are plainly instructed in Psalm 100:4 to "be thankful." When Jesus healed the ten lepers, only one returned to thank Him, and He was not pleased with the nine who failed to show their gratitude (Luke 17:12-19).

We also find that as Paul explains the sinful condition that will exist in the last days, he lists *unthankfulness* as a sign of the times (II Timothy 3:2).

Why does God ask us to express grati-

tude? First, it is pleasing to Him. But God also wants us to be thankful for our own benefit. **A grateful person is a happy person.** Joy and gladness accompany thankfulness. (See Isaiah 51:3.) Not only does an attitude of thankfulness make us happy ourselves, but it also makes others happy.

When a person is saved and looking forward to Heaven, he is overwhelmingly grateful for all Christ has done for him.

In addition, a person who is grateful is healthier emotionally. He is not so self-centered. Colossians 3:15 says, "Let the peace of God rule in your hearts...and be thankful."

I would suggest that you show your students gratitude and appreciation wherever you can. Hopefully they will learn from your example. □

### PEACE

*Above the hills in Eastern's sky  
A star! – so white, so bright, so high –  
Showering its benevolent light  
O'er all the earth that timeless night!*

*And with it hope and faith and love,  
Angel-heralded from above,  
While in a manger – crude, stark, bare –  
The "Prince of Peace" reposes there.*

*Gift of God on Christmas Day,  
Tender Dove on bed of hay,  
Prince and Promise – with us still –  
Offering peace to all who will.*

*Can such be found in turmoil's wake?  
Today must we brave hope forsake?  
Oh no, – 'tis ours, when ours we claim  
This God-sent Peace through Jesus' name.*

– Ruth E. Narramore



by Lee and Gloria Bendell

## GOD'S AMAZING GRACE

**WHAT IS THE MOST UNIQUE CHARACTERISTIC OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION?** This was the discussion topic of a group of theologians according to a story I read recently. Into their midst came C. S. Lewis, saying, "That's easy. **It's God's grace.**"

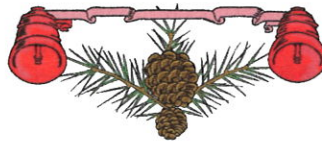
Yes, in all other religions works are necessary to attain one's salvation. It has to be earned. Yet, based on the authority of the Bible, we are able to come to Jesus Christ through grace by faith. Ephesians 2:8 and 9 clearly tells us, "*For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast.*"

**What is grace?** In his book, *The Grace Awakening*, Chuck Swindoll states, "We use grace to describe many things in life: A well-coordinated athlete or dancer; good manners and being considerate of others; beautiful, well-chosen words; consideration and care for other people; various expressions of kindness and mercy."

However, our initial concern is with its biblical usage — *God's* grace. One common description uses its acronym: **God's Riches At Christ's Expense**. Others distinguish between grace and mercy.

**Mercy is when God doesn't give us what we deserve; grace is when God gives us what we don't deserve.**

Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary has a discussion of grace. He writes: "GRACE — favor or kindness shown without regard to the worth or merit of the one who receives it and in spite of what that same person deserves. Grace is one of the key attributes of God. The Lord God is 'merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abounding in goodness and truth' (Exodus 34:6). Therefore, grace is almost always associated with mercy, love, compassion, and patience as that source of help and deliverance from distress.... The grace of God was supremely revealed and given in the person and work of Jesus Christ.



Jesus was not only the beneficiary of God's grace (Luke 2:40), but He was also its very embodiment (John 1:14), bringing it to mankind for salvation (Titus 2:11). In His death and resurrection Jesus restored the broken fellowship between God and His people, both Jew and Gentile, 'through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ' (Acts 15:11)."

This clarifies the initiative in our salvation as from God, not ourselves. "*For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life*" (John 3:16). God's love is part of His attribute of grace (and vice-versa). Our faith is a response to God's love and grace. We humbly come to God, not based on any merit of our own. By God's grace our sins are forgiven and we are made acceptable to a holy God. We are *saved!*

While we understand God's grace as essential to our salvation, we sometimes overlook that it is also operative in our sanctification or growth in Christ. "*And now I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified*" (Acts 20:32). "*But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ*" (II Peter 3:18)."

We find this also exemplified in Paul's greeting to believers in many of his epistles. "*Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ*" (Romans 1:7). "*The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all*" (Romans 16:24). (See also the salutation and close of Paul's other letters.) **We need God's grace for daily Christian living.**

Almost all Paul's scripture references are about God's grace, but he also tells us, "*Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus*" (Philippians 2:5). With Paul, we are to be imitators of Christ (I Corinthians 11:1).

**Should we not practice being graceful to others — kind, loving, forgiving — even though they may not deserve it?**

Again from Swindoll's book, after speaking about the ways Jesus manifested grace, he shares, "My plea is that we not limit it to Him. We, too, can learn to be just as gracious as He. And since we can, we must ... not only in our words and in great acts of compassion and understanding, but in small ways as well."

Even though we believe in it and hopefully practice it, some aspects of grace are still a mystery to us. We join with the hymn writer in singing:

*"I know not why God's wondrous grace,  
To me He hath made known,  
Nor why, unworthy, Christ in love,  
Redeemed me for His own.*

Accepting that mystery, we add our voices in praise, singing:

*"Marvelous grace of our loving Lord,  
Grace that exceeds our sin and our guilt,  
Yonder on Calvary's mount outpoured,  
There where the blood of the Lamb  
was spilt.  
Grace, grace, God's grace,  
Grace that will pardon and cleanse  
within;  
Grace, grace, God's grace,  
Grace that is greater than all our sin."*

All Scripture is quoted from the N.A.S.B. □





# OUR WORLD TODAY

by Eva Hallam Solberg

## RUNAWAY TEENS

A recent study surveyed 775 runaway teens from San Francisco, Denver, and New York City who were nineteen years old or younger and had been living on the streets for at least three months. Among this sampling, 78 percent had left home of their own accord while only 16 percent were told to leave. Fifty-nine percent said they left home because of general family conflicts; twenty-two percent indicated there had been abuse and rape; ten percent said they left because of their parents' drug and alcohol problems; six percent just wanted to leave home. Only two percent indicated they had experienced family disapproval of their sexual orientation.

*(Family Policy)*

## FORCED EUTHANASIA BASED ON AGE?

To hold down health care costs, the South African Health Department has begun refusing treatment for certain diseases. An early victim of the policy is a pastor who is being denied kidney dialysis treatment because he is over sixty years of age. A fellow pastor asked, "Is this the beginning of forced euthanasia based on age?"

*(EP News Service)*

## CONTROL OF THE MIND

Billy Graham shares spiritual insights about the battles waging inside the human mind: "One of the most important things in our lives is the control of the mind," he says. "Thoughts are powerful to harm us and thoughts are powerful to help us. Satan is

**"In Him was life; and the life was the light of men."  
—John 1:4**

battling for the control of your mind, and if he controls your mind, he'll control you."

Graham says he believes alcohol is the worst drug today, and is involved in over one-half of all automobile accidents in the U.S. "We're trying to ban cigarettes and tobacco, but you never hear a word about banning alcohol. Jesus Christ can cure the mind and body from their craving for things that destroy. Evil thoughts are a suicide of the soul."

*(Billy Graham Crusade Summary)*

## RELIGIOUS FAITH IN AMERICA

✿ A survey by the Barna Research Group found that the more money a person earns, the less likely he is to be religious or to have strong church ties.

✿ Baby Busters (ages eighteen to thirty-two) are the least likely to describe themselves as religious (62 percent), as Christian (72 percent), or as committed Christians (46 percent). They are the most likely to say they are searching for meaning in life (50 percent), and are twice as likely as other adults to say they are liberal (18 percent). The oldest segment — those fifty-two and older — are the most religious, the most likely to align with Christianity, the most satisfied with life, and the most likely

to hold conservative political views.

✿ More than four out of five people still view themselves as Christians, reports George Barna, the director of the survey. "The fact that so many people behave in ways that contradict the principles of the faith they claim to possess may be attributed to spiritual ignorance as much as to cultural seduction," says Barna.

*(EP News Service)*

## SENIOR ADULTS

The senior adult population in the United States of America is growing three times more rapidly than the national population rate. In spite of this fact, only one percent of the churches surveyed have a director of adult ministry, while 80 percent of the same churches have a volunteer or paid youth worker.

Senior adults possess the capacity to grow spiritually and enrich the lives of others. Too few churches provide real resources for spiritual growth or provide senior adult ministries beyond recreational activities.

Senior adults sometimes possess physical limitations, yet one survey shows that few churches provide ramps, elevators, large-print hymnals, or adequate sound systems to accommodate some of those needs. Rather than face such obstacles to worship, study, and

enrichment, many senior adults just do not go to church.

*(NAE Leadership Alert)*

## WHAT WE MOST OFTEN PRAY FOR

Nine out of ten adults say they pray. These are the things that they pray for most often, according to Yankelovich Partners for Lutheran Brotherhood: Their own families, 98 percent; the world's children, 81 percent; world peace, 77 percent; and co-workers, 69 percent.

*(USA Today)*

## RESCUE THE FLAG

Well-known fashion designer, Ralph Lauren, has made a gift of \$13 million to help with the restoration of the most famous flag in American history. The money will be used as part of an \$18 million project to rescue the flag that survived the "perilous fight" and inspired Francis Scott Key to write the words of our national anthem.

Mr. Lauren's gift will be used to preserve and protect this deteriorating symbol, which now hangs in the Museum of American History in Washington, fading and fraying with the passage of time.

*(Family Research Council)*

## DECLINING ABORTION RATE

Women who get abortions are reported to be: unmarried, 79.7 percent; white, 59.7 percent; under twenty-five, 52.6 percent.

Abortions performed in the USA in 1995, the last year of available statistics, hit a 20-year low of 20 per 1,000 women.

*(USA Today)*



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