



THE FBC FAMILY NEWSLETTER

PROCLAIMING GOD'S TRUTH.
INSPIRING A PASSION FOR GOD'S GLORY.

KEEPING CHRIST IN CHRISTMAS

Tom Buck

Christmas time is truly the most wonderful time of the year. I love the lights, and the decorations, and the music. It's a wonderful time to gather with loved ones and friends to laugh and enjoy the gift of family and friendship. It is truly a magical time.

As Christians, it can be a very distracting time in regards to the important things. We know that above everything else that the old cliché is true, "Jesus is the reason for the season." This is the special time of year that almost everywhere you go, you can hear the good news that God came in the form of man into this world for sinners. Yet, it is possible for all of that to blend into the background like the music at the department store. We can become busy with the events of the season and spend little time reflecting on the incredible truth that God became man so that he could save us from our sins.

I would like to encourage you in two specific ways as you enter this Christmas season. First, start a tradition with your family this year of doing something for someone less fortunate than you. Each year, our children pick a child who is not as privileged as our family to adopt for Christmas. We go out shopping for the wishes of that child, which almost always include basic necessities that our children take for granted (e.g. a warm winter coat, underwear, socks.) It's so easy for our kids to get focused on what they are getting rather than teaching them one of the most wonderful things we can do is model our Savior and be a giver to others. Find a way to take the love of Christ to someone in a particular way this Christmas. This is more than just giving material gifts, but sharing with them the most important gift of all, the saving message of the Gospel.

Second, remember that we are the ones called to make Christ central in Christmas. I remember several years ago the uproar over department stores not saying, "Merry Christmas," to their customers. Christians went on television

to decry this slight by the world. I was pastoring in Florida at the time and some churches hung signs in protest. Ironically, Christmas fell on a Sunday that year and many of those same churches cancelled their Sunday services so people could spend time with their family.

Now, I am all about spending time with your earthly family. I don't expect people to be at church every time the doors are open or to spend the entire Christmas season at church services. But I do believe the place we should have our families on any given Sunday morning is worshipping with our truest family, the family of God. This is why we are not having a Christmas Eve service but are putting all our attention on Christmas morning, which falls on a Sunday again this year. We will have one service that morning with the FBC family in a service filled with uplifting Christmas music and a special Christmas message to keep Christ at the center of it all.

Let's remember we are the ones called to be a light in this world and declare the good news of Christmas. Honestly, I don't expect department stores to do this, but I do take seriously my responsibility to do so. How hypocritical it would be for us to attack the world for not saying, "Merry Christmas," and then teach our children that we are too busy with other activities on that day to worship Jesus with God's people. Yes, you can worship God anywhere, but we are particularly commanded to set aside the first day of the week to gather corporately with God's people. Every Sunday we are to gather to declare the good news that Jesus came into this world. What better day to do this than Christmas Day itself? So if you are home this year, I encourage you to arrange your schedule around worshipping together with the First Baptist family. And if you are traveling, find a Christ-exalting church to join for worship of the One who we say is the reason for the season. I wish you all a wonderful and blessed Merry Christmas!

DATES OF INTEREST

MEN'S BREAKFAST
DECEMBER 3, 7:30 AM

CHURCH COUNCIL
DECEMBER 6, 6:00 PM

**SENIOR ADULT CHOIR
AND LUNCHEON**
DECEMBER 8, 10:30 AM

**FATHER/SON
GAME NIGHT**
DECEMBER 9, 7:00 PM

**DEACONS/WIVES
BANQUET**
DECEMBER 12, 6:00 PM

CHRISTMAS CONCERT
DECEMBER 18, 6:00 PM

CHRISTMAS EVE
NO SERVICE

**CHRISTMAS DAY: ONE
MORNING SERVICE,
NO SUNDAY SCHOOL**
DECEMBER 25, 10:30 AM

**SENIOR ADULT
NEW YEAR'S PARTY**
DECEMBER 31, 8:00 PM

**NEW YEAR'S DAY: ONE
MORNING SERVICE,
NO SUNDAY SCHOOL**
JANUARY 1, 10:30 AM

CHURCH COUNCIL
JANUARY 3, 6:00 PM

MEN'S BREAKFAST
JANUARY 7, 7:30 AM

**RETIRE THE DEBT
CAMPAIGN**
JANUARY 8

MEMBER'S MEETING
JANUARY 29, 6:00 PM

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GROWING UP IN A CHRISTIAN TOWN

James Seward

I'm not good for much in a Trivial Pursuit game. I usually have better luck when I guess than when I think I know the answer. But I'm told that my hometown is the answer to one of the questions in the original Genus Edition of Trivial Pursuit. The question: "Which town has the most churches per capita in America?" (The answer is Wheaton, IL, in case you ever get stuck playing the game).

Growing up in such a dominant Christian culture, I've had the chance to think long and hard about the advantages and challenges. Here are a few observations:

1. We underestimate how profoundly we are affected by our surrounding culture.
2. When the prevailing culture is anti-Christian, it is much easier for a Christian to turn to the Scriptures to shape his

beliefs and values.

3. When the prevailing culture is Christian, we are much more likely to rely on the surrounding culture for our beliefs and values. The culture instills in us a certain intuition about things, and it is hard, even for Scripture, to correct it.
4. Unfortunately, even a Christian culture is often out of line with Scripture. For the many good values and beliefs that are instilled, there are also values and beliefs that run contrary to Scripture.

These observations have driven home to me the importance of letting God's Word shape me – not my instincts from having grown up in a Christian home and a Christian town. Often God's Word will confirm to me things I learned intuitively from my Wheaton culture. But when it corrects my inherited cultural intuitions, I must be willing to let God's Word prevail over me – otherwise my Christian hometown has done me a disservice.

PASTORS' Q&A

Q Which country did the black flag represent in the processional during the Great Commission Focus Week?

A The black flag represents those who live in places with no access to the gospel. Many of those people live in countries where it is illegal to share the gospel (e.g. Vietnam, Azerbaijan). We rejoice that our church is able to support missionaries working in these types of places, including Vietnam and Azerbaijan.

Email your questions to james@fbclindale.com

IMMANUEL, GOD WITH US

Ronnie Stribble

Matthew 1:23 says, "Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us." I read of two missionaries who were captured and imprisoned in the same cell but were forbidden to speak to each other. Christmas came, and they desperately desired to communicate with one another. But how? One of the missionaries, shivering and silent, sat on the floor covered with hay. As he was playing with bits of hay around him, he thought that he discovered a silent way of communicating with his friend. He spelled out the word Immanuel. As soon as his friend saw the word, immediately he lit up with joy. They were captives, but they both believed that God was with them and that ultimate triumph would be theirs. Today, there is a concerted effort by some to remove all semblances of God, of Christmas, of Easter and anything else that is suggestive of Christianity, from our governments and schools. Christmas is a time to remember that God is truly with us and among us. He was with us at Bethlehem. He was for us at Calvary. He was in us at Pentecost. He is for us at the throne of God. Thus we conclude with the Apostle Paul in Romans 8:31, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" Such a savior must be shared. So this Christmas, let us find new ways of showing others, God is truly "Immanuel, God with us."



CULTURE CHANGE

Ryan Taber

Most of us work hard to make Christmas special to our children. We want them to have warm memories of holidays filled with warmth and laughter, good food, and that perfect gift. I can remember with tremendous detail specific gifts that I was given when I was a child. I can also remember special traditions that our family had around the Christmas season. But I don't remember one time as a child, sitting and reading the Scriptures as a family. My parents were Christians, but the idea of a parent leading a family Bible study or even reading the Scriptures was simply not a part of our culture. I suspect that's because it wasn't a part of their culture growing up either. My wife and I have made the decision to change that culture in our family. Christmas time is a natural time to make this a regular part of the fabric of your family. Make the decision to sit and read the Scriptures regularly this Christmas season, by changing the culture for your family, you may just be sharing the Bible with your grandchildren and great grandchildren as a love for the Scriptures gets passed from generation to generation.

NOTES OF THANKS

Sharon and I continue to be blessed by the prayers, love, generosity, and kindness shared with us by our First Baptist family. We greatly appreciate your prayers for God's grace and peace during this time.

To God be the glory and in His love,
Gary and Sharon Flory

I would like to thank everyone who has ministered to me while I am recovering from surgery. Your prayers, cards, food, visits, and phone calls have been encouraging and are deeply appreciated. It is truly a blessing to be a part of this loving and caring church.

Sandy Wells



THE ROCK CHILDREN'S MINISTRY Vernon Hughes

Each one of us has a job to do. Some people might work in an office. Some might work outside with their hands. Some work inside the home. You know, as parents, our most important job is making sure our children grow up with knowledge of and love for God. And hopefully through those efforts each of our children will come to know Jesus as their Savior and King. Deuteronomy 6:5-9 tells us "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates."

Please understand that I love each and every child here at FBC. I love getting the opportunity to speak truth into their lives from God's Word, whether that's at VBS, or Upward Basketball, or on a Sunday morning at Children's Worship. But, God's Word is clear, the job of teaching children the truth about His character is primarily the responsibility of the parents. You are responsible for the spiritual development of your children, just like Rachel and I are for our own three. Don't get me wrong. I'm not saying the church should do away with the Children's Ministry altogether; but I do think it's good to look at what God's Word has to say about parenting and to try to model our efforts in this ministry after what His Word says.

With that in mind, if your family is already having regularly scheduled Bible studies, I want to encourage you to keep up the good work, and if you're not... then, get one started. Beginning in January, we will have study guides for the upcoming week's Sunday school lesson available for any family that would like one. Our hope, as with the Children's Bulletin, is that this would be another resource for your family to look at together and give you something to use for a family Bible study. Think of it as homework for your children's Sunday school class, and try to make sure you've gone over it before Sunday. Think about how much deeper the discussions can go in their classes if they've already studied the material beforehand. I hope this will help your family as you try to shepherd your children toward Holiness.

'TIS THE SEASON FOR LONGING

Andrew Pressley

These days, retail stores hardly clear the fall festivities off the shelves before they start rolling out the Christmas goods. Jesus' birth is **BIG BUSINESS** for many companies across America, and they aim to cash in on the season. And cash in they do. Gift giving has evolved from a few appreciated necessities and treats to the beating of other shoppers (sometimes literally) to the best deals on Black Friday. Retail stores across the states have learned how to implant that holiday shopping spirit, to the tune of bells chiming, "spend, spend, spend, spend." It all kicks off on the day after Thanksgiving.

Mall decorations, civic festivities, and weather change all help get us in that American Christmas spirit. But perhaps the most influential factor of all: Christmas music. Ah, yes, Christmas music. Whether you loathe it or lavish in it, Christmas music is all around us long before Christmas Day (and in Ryan Taber's world since Labor Day). From the nearly unbearable "All I Want for Christmas Is My Two Front Teeth" to the truth-filled classics like "Joy to the World," there's no escaping Christmas music during this season.

Sometime in the last century, the church began to follow the department stores' Christmas schedule, too. When Thanksgiving wraps up, churches take their cues from commercial radio stations and churn out the Christmas favorites. However, this hasn't historically been the case. Before consumerism had its influence, Christmas music was reserved for a season known as Christmastide (think "The Twelve Days of Christmas"), which starts on Christmas Day. The time leading up to Christmas Day, historically, is known as Advent. It is a season marked with somber reflection on humanity's dire need for a Savior, looking forward hopefully and longingly toward the celebration of Jesus' birth on Christmas Day (songs like "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel" and "Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus" come from this season).

Now, don't worry, I'm not suggesting we forego all the Christmas music leading up to Christmas Day. I'm simply saying this: don't miss the opportunity to reflect on the fact that mankind stood in desperate need of a Savior. Reflect on your own life and need for Jesus' atoning work, and then the gift we celebrate at Christmas will be that much sweeter. It's hard to appreciate the gravity of the gift until you rightly view the need. Reflect on your desperate need for Christ this season, and then sing all the more joyfully at his incarnation: "Let earth receive her King!"

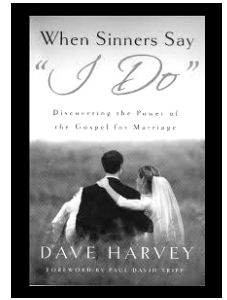
Speaking of Christmas music, I'm giving away 16 copies of a great Christmas album: Red Mountain Music's *Silent Night* to the first 16 people to e-mail me for one at andrew@fbclindale.com. Happy Advent!

Merry Christmas

to our beloved church members from the staff at First Baptist Church!

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AVAILABLE IN OUR LIBRARY: *WHEN SINNERS SAY "I DO" (DAVE HARVEY)*



We often think of marriage as the path to fulfilling all of our personal desires. When those desires crumble, we are left worn out and despairing. So many marriage books, then, go about helping each person understand what their spouse's desires might be, and then explain how meeting those desires is the key to a happy marriage.

This book is different. It begins with entirely different assumptions. This book is about unleashing the life-transforming truths of the gospel on your marriage. It teaches us a right view of ourselves, and it challenges us to approach marriage not for our own personal agenda (or our spouse's!) – but for God's agenda. It is a humorous and candid book that is indispensable reading for engaged/newly wed couples and a valuable read for any married person wanting to think more biblically about marriage.

LIBRARY HOURS:

SUNDAYS
9:00-9:45 AM & 10:30-11:30 AM

WEDNESDAYS
5:30-6:00 PM

**"IT'S IMPOSSIBLE TO ANSWER THE QUESTION, "WHAT IS A CHRISTIAN?"
WITHOUT ENDING UP IN A CONVERSATION ABOUT THE CHURCH;
AT LEAST IN THE BIBLE IT IS."**

-MARK DEVER, AUTHOR OF *9 MARKS OF A HEALTHY CHURCH*



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