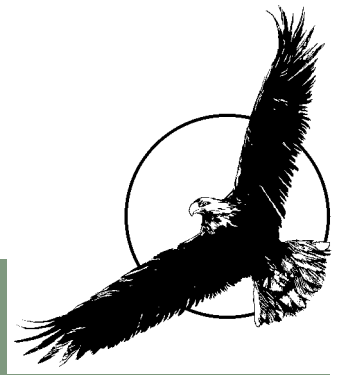


The Messenger



MOUNTAIN BIBLE CHURCH

Volume 23 Issue 12

December 2011

The A – Z Of The Manger

Affirm the Biblical account of a Savior being born in Bethlehem of Judea this Christmas and you announce hope for mankind's eternal destiny as well. Aspire to give 100% of your undistracted attention, at least for a few hours, toward adoring our Savior and adorning your life with the true ornaments of Christmas. Activate the 'Peace to all mankind' the Angels announced that night and discover the love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness and self-control that are included.

Because of the ruffraff surrounding December 25th; the beauty of our 'Savior-Redeemer's' birth gets blurred and sometimes even buried. Blending the fun family activities available this time of year with the blessings of the 'manger' is at times like crossing a 'treacherous bridge.' Buck the world's traditions this year and build your family's Christmas traditions of the real reason for the celebration.

Challenge yourself and your family to embrace the truth of the Gospel captivated in that humble manger scene. When people circumvent this most cataclysmic event in history, God's message of hope and peace are circumvented as well.

Deadening peoples senses to the purpose of the birth of Jesus in no way distorts the truth of what happened. Disbelief can only defy the truth it cannot change or destroy it.

Exchanging gifts was and still is a common way to celebrate a great event so in a sense; unwittingly, the word affirms the greatness of the original cause of celebration by their focus on giving gifts today.

Faith has always motivated people to 'act in accordance to what they believe.' Fear is the counterbalance to faith. Fear will direct faith toward either the bondage of hate and despair or the Freedom of hope and love. Freedom in the hope, peace and love of God, shown at the manger results when faith wins and fear is foiled.

Good people are identified by the works of their life. Gain is calculated by the people served rather than by the money or gifts received. Grip tightly God's blessings on good you have done when you give your time, energy, and talents to serve others.

Harold the 'Good News' in your world just like the

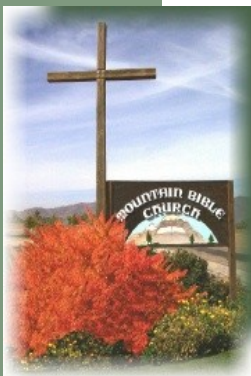
Angels in heaven and the humble shepherds did that hallowed night. Help and healing was announced in Christ's coming. Honor Christ always and especially during the Christmas season.

Inside anyone that has a strong passion is a flame that has been ignited. Inspect what lights your fire and insert into your life those elements that honor God. Inscribe God's words and purposes on your life and you will inspire others to seek, find, and praise our Lord Jesus with you.

Journey through the rest of your life knowing you are in the hand of Jesus who is in the hand of the Father. Jump at every opportunity to remind yourself and other that this Jesus is the very one who is able to justify all mankind with the Father if they believe Jesus is our Savior even as He claimed.

Kneel before Jesus in humility and gratitude as you worship Him. Kindle daily the commitment honor Him with all your life. Keep your mind focused on the one who loved you and gave Himself for you.

Lean on Jesus when your way grows weary. Laminate your life inside the protection of your all-powerful and loving God. Leave your burdens



Continued...

AWAY IN A MANGER
THIS SIMPLE CHRISTMAS
MUSICAL FOR KIDS
PROMISES TO WARM
YOUR HEART AND MAKE
YOU SMILE. IT IS A
GREAT TIME TO INVITE
YOUR EXTENDED
FAMILY, FRIENDS AND
NEIGHBORS. THE
PROGRAM WILL BE
PRESENTED ON
DECEMBER 18, DURING
THE MORNING
WORSHIP SERVICES. IT
HAS ALL THE
TRADITIONAL
CHRISTMAS STORY
CHARACTERS SO YOU
WON'T BE
DISAPPOINTED. MARK
YOUR CALENDAR,
BRING YOUR CAMERA,
AND BE PREPARED TO BE
TRANSPORTED BACK IN
TIME TO THE NIGHT OUR
SAVIOR WAS BORN.

and cares with Him, He'll take care of you.

Maturity in a Christian will show itself by a commitment to magnify Christ and minimize themselves. Moving mountains is a daily routine event for our God. Multi-tasking to cause all things to work for our good is just what Christ does for His children.

No one other than that baby born in a manger has ever been sent to earth to be our Savior - Redeemer. Neglecting this Jesus negates the nurturing He has planned for you. Nab onto Jesus, His Church, and He will navigate your life with directions and protection.

Open your heart to the opportunities Jesus offers to those who obey Him. Own access to the greatest storehouse of opportunity and blessing ever offered to man when you oust yourself and boss of your life and install Jesus as your Lord.

People are always at the center of God's purposes. Plans to give us a future filled with hope was the passion that drove Christ to the manger, and then to the disciplines in living a sinless life, and finally to the Cross.

Quickly shed the noise of the world and bask in the quietness of the only one who can qualify you for heaven. Question every precept that contradicts God's Word and quit seek-

ing for wisdom apart from God.

Run the race God has given you to run. Ready yourself for life's race by repairing and refreshing your shoes that make you **'Ready to spread the Good News about Jesus that gives peace for the world.'**

Sanctify your body, soul and spirit for the plans and purposes of God. Seek Him claiming His promise that those who seek him will find Him.

Taste for yourself and see that the Lord is good. Think about all the benefits in trusting Him. Thank Him continually for what He has done for you and you will thrive in your faith and talk about His goodness.

Urge your family and your friends to unite with you at the foot of the manger which leads directly to the foot of the cross. Uproot the old traditions that you may utilize the new.

Vow in your heart to value and worship God's only son Jesus. View the only child ever conceived and born in the manner of Jesus. Visit the manger this Christmas; not because we know December 25th is the actual day Jesus was born, but because He was born as God's gift of promise for all mankind.

Winning seems to be primary in the thinking of the people in our culture. Winning always accompa-

nies worshipping the Christ, who was born and laid in the manger.

X-ray technology uses high-energy rays to take images of bones inside our bodies. X-rays for the soul of man is the product of God and His Word. "God's word judges a person's thoughts and intentions."

Yield to the message and purpose of the 'Baby in the Manger.' Yoke yourself with the God whose love for you caused Him to send His only son to be our redeemer. Yelling, (as it were), by the Angels in heaven the proclamation that Peace to all mankind was here.

Zip-codes are included in addresses to expedite the delivery of letters and packages. Zip-codes were used in the Bible also but we don't call them by that name. Zeroing in on the zip-codes in the Bible will show you that the Christ child born in Bethlehem Ephrata is a clear zip-code to identifying the real Messiah for all people.

May God's special blessings and protection be with and upon each of you this month of celebration.

Your Pastor, Marv

Guilt Or Grace

An official of VFW was talking to me in September and mentioned that in the past two months three veterans from Tehachapi had committed suicide. I was startled, but only listened as he continued. One soldier in his early twenties had just returned from Iraq in the preceding weeks. He was on medication for PTSD, the acronym for post traumatic stress disorder. Another veteran became a heavy drinker and lost his job and his wife, prior to his suicide.

The official blamed the suicides on PTSD he pronounced it 'pits'. I didn't know what he was talking about until I listened further. He said that very little was being done to help veterans with PTSD, although there was one home for veterans in northern California that seemed to be helping. At that home the veterans were enmeshed in studies and physical activities to keep them busy. In addition they had group meetings where they met with other veterans who had had similar experiences - much like an AA meeting. The troubled veteran was told over and over, "It's not your fault. It's not your fault. It's not your fault."

I know very little about PTSD, but I presupposed that the problem was the result of emotional turmoil

related to the constant threat of one's death. After hearing about the treatment that seemed to have a beneficial, albeit limited affect, I now think that I am beginning to understand what it means to suffer from PTSD.

Young men from good homes have been taught compassion and concern for others.

"Don't mistreat your pets. Don't pull the wings off of flies. Be kind and gentle."

The young soldier is sent to fight and now he is faced with the horrors of war.

The news articles I have read about the war in Iraq, tell of civilian deaths, of enemy soldiers being dismembered by explosions. I remember one report during the early days of the invasion of Iraq when a tank crew member came upon an enemy soldier who was cut in two by heavy weapons. He was sickened by the gruesome sight and promptly vomited.

Nothing can compare to watching a fatally wounded person, possibly of a similar age, during his last moments. He may have once been the enemy but now he is weaponless and harmless, just another human. Another human being whose face presents a tormented picture of pain and fear as life ebbs from his body.

I am not writing about the unfairness of war, nor of suicide, nor of PTSD. I do not assume that I can understand the depth of the feeling that a veteran with PTSD is going through, but the picture described above, seems to be that of a person suffering with regret and remorse.

I dare say that many of us may have experienced the pangs of conscience, and it has nothing to do with anything as troubling as that which may have contributed to the traumatic death of another. Guilt is a universal emotion. If only something could be done to obliterate that awful feeling. Some magic potion to take it away.

Julia Johnston was involved in the work of Sunday schools at the First Presbyterian Church of Peoria Illinois for many years, and also the writer of lesson materials for primary age children for David C. Cook Publishing Company. She wrote approximately 500 hymn texts, and the song 'Grace Greater Than Our Sin' is one of my favorites, especially the third verse.

Dark is the stain that we cannot hide,

What can avail to wash it away?

Look! There is flowing a crimson tide;

Whiter than snow you may be today.

Chorus:

Grace, grace, God's grace,

Grace that will pardon and cleans within.

Grace, grace, God's grace,

Grace that is greater than all our sin.

A minister friend was riding on a plane while writing a sermon for his upcoming engagement, when a lady in the adjacent seat kept looking over his shoulder as he wrote. She finally interrupted him and said, "Do you really believe that?"

His answer was simple, yet profound, "Yes, I chose to believe."

Forgiveness does not erase the memories of the past, but for the person who chooses to believe, it removes the onus of guilt. There is a vast difference between the comforting words of someone trying to convince you that the past is not your fault, and forgiveness for past failings, even when that comforter is one who understands your grief because they have suffered a similar past. Only you know for sure if what you have done was truly your fault or not, but the good news is this, it doesn't really matter. Forgiveness is offered and available if you choose to accept it.

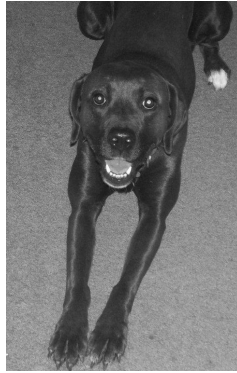
Dr. Sam Conklin

All Caged Up

If you're an animal owner or want to be one, I can honestly say that they can fill a hole of many needs. As for my dog and me, we have taken care of one another for many years. I keep her doggie bowl full and she protects us on the darkest, quietest night, when for some reason, she can hear every sound near and distant. Truly a best friend- protector of the unknown!

Our dog Cinderella was rescued from the pound in Bakersfield by my daughter Heather and me. Since she turned out to be a true friend to us all, I felt it might be worth looking at the dog pound once again. She could have herself a needed companion and it would be awe-

some to see this beautiful dog aide in the training of a new puppy and for free! It's so nice to have a dog poop out by the fence line and not have to spend time or money with a pooper scooper. Not to mention the other added benefits of not having to smell it or have it attract flies around the house. We've never had to tip toe around land mines in our yard. I take that back, when my mother-in-law visits for the holidays, she sometimes brings her Golden Retriever Sally over and the above statement couldn't be any further from the truth. Look



out! Sorry mom!

So recently I stopped by the Lancaster animal pound to check out some new possibilities. On both occasions, I had someone with me. When I asked if they would like to come in with me and check out what was available, they replied they would prefer to wait in the van.

Finding this odd the second time I asked why? The answer was about how depressing it was going to be while seeing all the animals locked up in cages. I understood.

I casually walked up to

the typical government built cinder block building and opened the double glass door to the front office. There were so many people coming and going with animals, it was almost a zoo. People were looking for new friends while others were dropping off their old companions. Perhaps because of hard times that had come upon them or perhaps they moved into an apartment where animals weren't allowed or who knows how many other possible reasons there could be. Once inside I found the red dispenser bolted to the wall on my right and quickly grabbed a ticket. Num-

Words Of Thanks

Words can't express how much your generosity has meant to me. Over the last few months, you have shown God's love through your willingness to help Aminah and I bring home another little girl from China. I'm usually not at a loss for words, but in November when I was presented with checks that were from the many fundraisers, I was unable to speak the words that were in my heart. As many of you know, God laid adoption on my

heart (again) and I began the process in 2007. While it may have been a long process, I believe that God was preparing me along the way.

It amazes me how many people have jumped in to help in so many ways. I am touched with the kindness so many of showed by taking a box and putting your spare change in it, thank you so much for helping. I would like to thank Marilyn Berg, Yvonne Dunlap, Ed Dunlap, Carol Weston, Anna Cardiel, Chris Hughes, Ruth Morris and Kathy Krieger for all of their

help with the Ice Cream Social and Raffle. Also thanks to the youth group for being so thoughtful with their donation of the proceeds from the August Coffee House. A very special thanks to Michael White for all of his work coordinating the performers and making sure everything was in place that day. Pastor Marvin, I truly appreciate the kindness and love you show every day. You care for the members of this church in your actions and deeds. The Mountain Bible Church Family has shown

me how much God loves me and how much better His Plan is than my plan ever could be.

Many people ask, "When are you going to travel to get your little girl?" and while I don't have a specific date, it is looking like February. It is difficult waiting, but I know that God's timing is perfect. Again thank you so much for being my church family and for your thoughtfulness, generosity, and love.

In His Love, Karri Fogle

Continued...

ber 80 it read. I looked up at the ticket counter that was mounted on the back Eastside wall and instantly felt I would run out of patience and quickly, since they just displayed number 56. Bored, I looked around and noticed a small sign above the back door that read "To Kennels". Feeling like I owned the place (a trait I possess that has its good and bad qualities) I placed my paper ticket on the front counter and made my way outside without asking, heading toward the many kennel buildings full of animals that awaited me.

I started at building 1 and opened the big heavy metal door and placed my shoe on a freshly washed concrete floor. Sure enough, once inside I was excited by all the choices and at the same time rather depressed by the sad faces. There were a total of 5 or so buildings which were long and narrow and perhaps 20 or so cages per wall. A lot of animals had their own cage, perhaps because they were so big while others shared a cage with two or three others and most looked at me as if they were saying "Pick me, pick me!" I walked through the remaining buildings looking for a Boxer. That's the dog I felt would make a great addition to our family back home. Having found none, I thought that perhaps a Boxer mix would be nice but still nothing. Walking

out empty handed from the last building, I felt sad knowing I had saved no one but wishing I could have saved them all. But how could I? I'm only one man and having limited resources, it would be foolish for me to even try!

Leaving, I wondered how I could just walk away from them all. Just knowing that here, in this place, were so many heartbroken animals or even abused friends that were locked up and forgotten, waiting and even longing to get out or escape the locked fence gates. My mind then came up with this thought. Are there people who feel the same way? People who are in cages? For what reason would they be locked up? These animals had no choice in the matter but we do I thought to myself.

Thinking more about cages and the confinement one puts or keeps themselves locked into and stay there because they or we are either too scared to leave or just don't know how. On this day or any other day for that matter, there was no way I could have helped all those animals, but there is someone who can save all of us on any given day. His name is Christ Jesus. He has and always will have the power and resources to save us all. We just need to ask. There's no reason to stay locked up in your cage, for whatever reason you've put yourself in there, because

there is a way out. These cages come in many different sizes and shapes and were built from many different reasons. But no matter what type of cage you've created, He can save us all. Because He forgives us all and has promised to save us all no matter what the cause. Won't you open the door to your cage and ask Him to take you home today?

Dear Heavenly Father, I have put myself into a place where I feel I'm all alone now and feel no one wants me around anymore. I fear I have done so much wrong that there's no turning back or around. I have thought a lot about You lately but can't find the strength to climb out. Will You help me? Would You ever forgive me for what I've done? I've heard that You will but don't know where or how to start? Will You help me? Will You show me the way out? I'm ready to try now and ask if You could please put into place the means so that I can remove myself from where I am to where You are. I will learn to trust and have faith in the Holy Spirit to lead the way and trust in the ways You will set forth, even without my own understanding. Father I will climb out and reach for You so that I can be pulled out. Thank you for Your forgiveness and grace that I will receive for loving You. Amen.

David Lange



**XTREME KIDS
HELPED SHOPPED
FOR THE FEW
FRESH ITEMS WE
NEEDED FOR THE
THANKSGIVING
FOOD BASKETS**



78 BOXES TURNED IN
THIS YEAR



CHRISTMAS SHOE BOX
PACKING WITH
XTREME KIDS



Thanking Him For His Mercy

My name is Lizzy. I thank God for directing my steps to Bakersfield Rescue Mission. The Mission is more than just a place to lay my head, **it's a place to lay my heart.** I was addicted to meth and pot for 15 years. We, who have addictions, build our entire lives around drugs. That's how it was with me. I allowed myself to be bombarded by the poor choices I made. **I needed God.** I needed to anchor my soul in Jesus. And that's where I am today: anchored, secured, and safe in His loving hands.

Today, I see myself as a servant of God. I've never been so happy. I'm staying focused on the positive.

Each time I read the Bible, Satan's voice gets smaller. I hope you can see that happiness in my face. And that joy is for real.

I also want to take this moment to thank you for all you do to keep the doors of the Mission open for someone like me. You have no idea how much you mean to someone who had lost her way in life. Thank you for your giving heart. You provide me with clothes

(I've never dressed so well), food, shelter, and personal items like soap and shampoo. It feels so good to eat a meal on a real plate.

Today and every day I write love letters to God. It's my journal for living. My life in one of gratitude for all God is doing for me. It's my prayer that you and your family will enjoy a great Christmas.

Lizzy



A Life Well Lived

My friend died. Some might prefer to say that she passed on, but as far as I'm concerned, Janice is gone, and I miss her and though we knew it was coming, it happened way too soon. She was 56. I expected to have her for many more years, but God had other plans.

One of the fun things about getting to know Janice was finding out that we had gone to the same college. Although a few years apart, we could still talk about the professors we had and the experiences a small Christian college gave us.

Janice became my rock of Gibraltar when Stephen was sick. She had arranged to get Stephen to-

gether with her daughter Julie just weeks before Stephen was diagnosed with cancer. Unbelievably she allowed, even encouraged her daughter to continue seeing this very sick young man. That relationship brought life to Stephen's shadowy days of illness. It was unbelievable to me because I think I would have cautioned either of my children to back away – don't get too involved, you might get hurt, but not Janice. She had an important lesson to teach.

At her service the pastor spoke of the dash between the years of birth and death, that tiny mark that mostly goes unnoticed, contains all the years and experiences of one's life.

Janice's dash could best be summed up in a single word, relationships. She had a gift for making everyone who came into her sphere feel special. She loved having people around her planning parties to bring people together, hosting dinners to get to know people better.

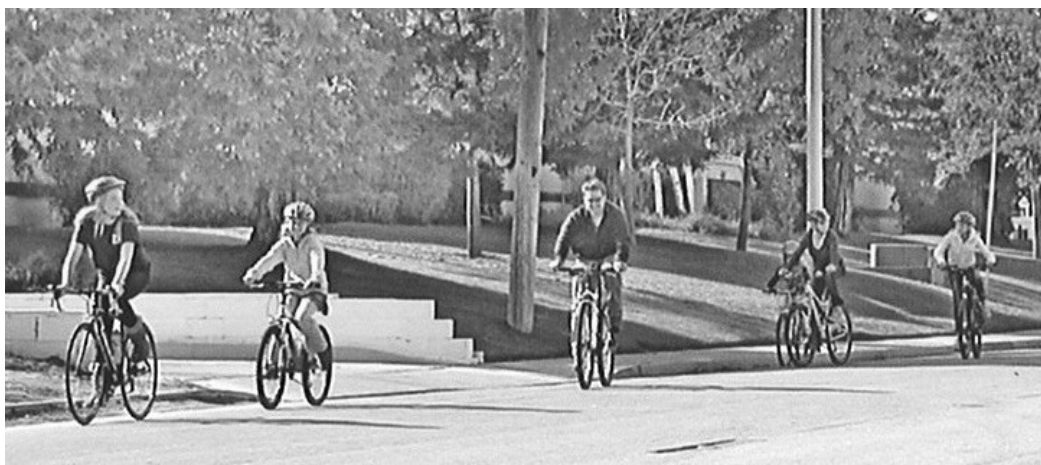
She knew that there was nothing on this earth that she could take to heaven with her but her family and friends. For them, she poured out her heart. I thank God that I will have eternity to spend with my friend. Until then, I want to remember the importance of the lesson Janice taught me. As far as I am able, let nothing come between me and my relationships with others.

The people in my life

have been placed there for a God given purpose. I want every one of them to spend eternity in heaven. What am I willing to do, to give?

Who will remember that I once kept a clean house or ironed every week? For certain no one will remember me as a good cook. With Christmas only weeks away, it is easy to get too tired or too busy to make time for others. What my loved ones really want, what they will remember are the gifts of time and attention. Can I show them by my life the everlasting importance of relationship? Thank you Janice for a lesson well taught.

Carol Shy



THE MASON FAMILY RIDE THEIR BIKES TO CHURCH. PHOTO BY STEVE AND CAPPY STEPHENS

Thank You!!!

I know December is right around the corner but it's still not too late to say thank you to everyone for all they did to make our Pumpkin Patch Party a success. It was our first year outside and it was wonderful. The weather couldn't have been better so thanks to all who prayed on our behalf. There were about 250+ people who came to enjoy the evening. That was the perfect number as we had just enough pizza and hot dogs for the hungry hordes.

We added some new elements such as our 'all-in-one' Bible story time and prizes donated by our community businesses as well as moving all the games to the parking lot. The trunk-or-treat was very well received. The decorated cars were so creative and really added to the atmosphere. We were especially wowed by the pirate ship. There was plenty of candy for all, and some people even went home with cakes from the cake walk. All in all, it was a delightful evening and we look forward with anticipation for next year.

Lori Henry



TWO BOYS WERE WALKING HOME FROM SUNDAY SCHOOL AFTER HEARING A STRONG PREACHING ON THE DEVIL. ONE SAID TO THE OTHER, 'WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT ALL THIS SATAN STUFF?'

THE OTHER BOY REPLIED, 'WELL, YOU KNOW HOW SANTA CLAUS TURNED OUT. IT'S PROBABLY JUST YOUR DAD.'

For Help and Answers

Call the church office-----822-7541
Crisis Prayer requests-----Call Christine, 822-8849
Change address or phone-----822-7541
Doctrinal questions-----822-7541
Wedding questions-----822-7541

Hospital visits-----822-7541
Counseling Information-----822-7541
Child dedication Service-----822-7541
Student Ministries (Junior High to College)-----822-7541
Membership/Baptism-----822-7541

The Messenger of Mountain Bible Church

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Distribution: Neya Kuithe

Sunday Morning Services at Mountain Bible Church: 8:30 and 10:30

Children's Programs are available at the same times.

Infant care (0-2 years) is available in the nursery.

Senior Pastor: Dr. Marvin D. Slifer

Children's Ministries Director: Lori Henry

Youth Ministries Director: Christy Boyd

Human Resource Director: Christy Boyd

Trustees for 2011: Dennis Birks, Robert Garcia, Paul Smith, Michael White, and Ron Williams.

Elders for 2011: Dennis Collins, Sam Conklin, Ed Dunlap, Dae Lantz, Dave Lawrence, and Andy Ohmit.

The Messenger is published monthly. All submissions to *The Messenger* are due the twentieth (20th) of each month. We would like contributions of news articles, photos and other information from the Youth Group, Men's and Ladies Bible Studies, Missions Team, Let's Eat Cafe, Energizers and Praise Team. Please remember to put your name on the article so we can give proper credit.

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