

The Calvary connection

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Who's In Charge?

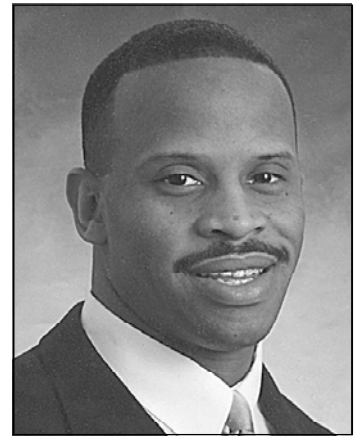
Many of us were not pleased with how the presidential election turned out, and perhaps some of us were pleased. Conversations with a number of church members and residents of this community confirmed the fact that we were looking for a change in the White House. Amongst our community, there is a gnawing and growing dissatisfaction with the prolonged military conflict in Iraq. In addition to that, there are some domestic issues such as the lack of health care, the economy and education which are on our collective minds. The presidential campaign was energetic and contentious. The attention of the world was on "Bush and Kerry". Who would the president be? Who would be in charge?

For now, it appears that President Bush is "in charge" for the next four years. But is he? It is crucial for Disciples of Christ to be involved in the political process. There are issues about which we are called to take a stand. We are called to be God's liberating presence in the world. However, in all of this, we must be reminded that no matter "who is in charge" in the White House, God is yet on the throne. This prevents us from being too discouraged by the outcome of the election. And this also corrects and liberates those who would tend to place too much confidence in the position of the president and in the one who occupies that position. The President of the United States is one of the most powerful

political offices in the world. But do know that God is ultimately in charge.

Christmas declares this very truth. The season is upon us. Christmas is a reminder of who is actually in charge. The election has come and gone. Now, we await the celebration of the coming of our Christ. Of our Christ, the prophet says:

"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and he shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order



it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this."

— Isaiah 9:6, 7

Be encouraged! There is one who sits on the throne whose authority critiques and mocks the authority of earthly "kings". We pray for the present administration and we hope for the best. But we also take heart in the fact that, the one who is in charge, is the one who was "born in a manger and wrapped in swaddling clothes."

— Rev. Jerry M. Carter, Jr.

• CHRISTIAN COUNSEL •

Need Christian advice? We can help. Place your anonymous question in the *Calvary Connection* mailbox.

Q: *Am I being overly Christian and robbing my children of their childhood if I don't promote Santa Claus, and other mythical figures?*

A: I guess the first issue that needs to be dealt with in this question is to understand what is actually being implied by the words "overly Christian." I personally don't think it's possible to ascend to a level where we become overly Christian, because by definition, to be Christian is to

be Christ-like and we can obviously never acquire enough Christ-likeness. However, I also think that we can do our children a grave disservice by being "overly religious" in our interactions with them, especially as it relates to our attempt to convey why it is that we (Christians) celebrate these days differently. The contrast between the two spectrums (Christianity/Religiosity) is this; true Christianity offers the child a relevant explanation (based on sound biblical convictions), along with healthy and realistic alterna-

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tives so that he or she is not deprived of childhood in any way. On the other hand, religiosity is oftentimes unnecessarily dogmatic (one-sided or narrow) and void of relevant substance to support its claim. In essence it says to the child; "this is the way it's going to be, and you don't need to know why I feel so strongly about it." This kind of approach will only serve to confuse and frustrate the child further.

I believe that it is absolutely imperative that we begin to "train our children up in the way that they should go, so that when they're old, they do not depart from it." In other words, I think that by telling them the truth about these

days and mythical figures as soon as possible (i.e. the Easter Bunny, Santa Claus, etc.) it not only serves as a tool to strengthen our relationships with our children, but is also a wonderful opportunity to deposit the "biblical seed of truth" into them, which is at the core of how these days came about. As long as we remember to offer them "healthy and realistic" alternatives so that they are not deprived of any part of their childhood, then there's no reason to compromise!

— Rev. Mike Bethune

SANTA'S PRAYER ON CHRISTMAS EVE

The sleigh was all packed, the reindeer were fed,
But Santa still knelt by the side of the bed.

"Dear Father," he prayed "Be with me tonight.
There's much work to do and my schedule is tight.

I must jump in my sleigh and streak through the sky,
Knowing full well that a reindeer can't fly.

I will visit each household before the first light,
I'll cover the world and all in one night.

With sleigh bells a-ringing, I'll land on each roof,
Amid the soft clatter of each little hoof.

To get in the house is the difficult part,
So I'll slide down the chimney of each child's heart.

My sack will hold toys to grant all their wishes.
The supply will be endless like the loaves and the fishes.

I will fill all the stockings and not leave a track.
I'll eat every cookie that is left for my snack.

I can do all these things Lord, only through You,
I just need your blessing, then it's easy to do.

All this is to honor the birth of the One,
That was sent to redeem us, Your most Holy Son.

So to all of my friends, least Your glory I rob,
Please Lord, remind them who gave me this job."

Amen

— Author unknown

• CALVARY GRAPEVINE •

Have a question? We'll get the answer.
Place your anonymous question in the *Calvary Connection* mailbox.

Q: What is Supervised Ministry?

A: Supervised Ministry is a field study program that is a part of the curriculum of most modern seminaries. Over the past several years, Calvary has been blessed to have a number of seminarians select our church as the location of their supervised ministry program of study. The most recent student to partner with Calvary in this program is Minister Betty Adams, a second year student at Drew, whose home church is Fountain Baptist in Summit. Others who have done their supervised ministry at Calvary include Rev. Adam Spencer, Min. John Bowden, & Min. David Hollowell, all as part of their Drew requirements, and Min. Tim Brown, from Princeton Seminary.

Ordinarily, supervised ministry is done at a host church that is not the candidate's home church (e.g., Min. Hooks did her super-

vised ministry at Mt. Zion in Boonton). The program essentially is a one-year internship at a local congregation where the candidate gets hands-on experience in various aspects of ministry. The student sets goals for the year in terms of involvement and growth, and is helped along by the guidance and monitoring of a Teaching Committee. The program is generally done in the second year of seminary, and provides a great opportunity to develop and hone skills, as well as to seriously explore career ministry options. Feedback is not only given periodically by the candidate's Teaching Committee, but by a coach, who serves as a liaison with the Seminary, and by Pastor Carter. Progress is charted throughout the year, and a final evaluation is done at the end of the internship to help channel the student's interests and gifts into future effectiveness in ministry pursuits.

MINISTRY SPOTLIGHT

The Media Ministry: More Than Just Sound Checks

By Nathan McClung

Misconception: The media ministry just turns the microphones on and sits in that little room every Sunday.

Well, what do we do?

When asked to provide an article to the Calvary Connection, it made us think about what we really do. Each ministry has their own way of ministering to the community. Some sing, others greet, many nurture and some provide. The greatest demonstration of what the Media Ministry provides is most noticed when we are not noticed at all. When someone or anyone approaches a microphone and they don't have to say "testing", blow into a microphone or signal that "I am using the yellow one", is when we are doing our best ministry. The Media ministry is best known as "the behind the scenes ministry" by most. We liken ourselves to the Facility Managers in that you don't know we are there until you need something. That's ok with us as we know we are serving the Lord in our own special way. In our ministry we not only turn on microphones but we perform many other tasks to make your worship experience the best it can be.

We Operate Audio Equipment

If it were only that easy! For every service, we monitor and maintain the audio equipment. Our main piece of equipment consists of a 32-port audio board that feeds each microphone, speaker and recording device in the building. We start at least 15 minutes before every service, yes 7:45 a.m. service as well, and make sure the system is functioning properly. This includes: changing batteries; checking levels; stabilizing the system; and checking the inputs and outputs of each device.

We Operate Video Equipment

How do we create those videos that are available to purchase? Strategically placed, are two cameras in the sanctuary. With these cameras, you can see every inch of the sanctuary. We even see you when you are "meditating" on the word! We try to capture as many aspects of the worship service to provide the feeling that you are at church, even if you are watching from home. We typically provide this media on VHS. We will continue to advance with technology and will be considering DVD recording in the future.

Our Outreach Mediums

Our most common ways of distributing the Word is through the service at church. However, we get the Word out in many other ways via audio cassette tapes, VHS video tapes, Compact Discs, live telephone broadcasts and even Internet streamings of previously recorded services. We also video tape special events like the Christmas Program, concerts, etc. Live telephone broadcasts can be heard by calling 973-267-9079, ext. 218. Since our lines are limited, please reserve these for the truly sick and

shut-in. The internet streamings can be found at www.calvary-baptistchurch.org.

Our Sales and Duplications

After each Sunday service, you can pick up the previous week's message. We try very hard to provide quality tapes at an affordable price. It is amazing to see visitors' expressions when they ask the price and we tell them \$1. The prices vary for each of the other mediums according to the costs to duplicate. In the future we may be providing the service on DVDs and who knows what other methods of spreading the Word may develop. If there is a special service that you missed, simply prepay for it on Sunday and it will be ready on the next Sunday. You can order/purchase them after each service in the Mahalia Jackson Fellowship Hall.

What Else?

The Media Ministry is recognized as the 2004 Ministry of the Year for their dedication and service to the congregation and community! The ministry is steadily changing to keep up with the technological advancements in our effort to spread the Word and build God's kingdom. One change in 2005 will include



A view of the media booth

new officers. The Chair of Media will be Courtney Parchment and the Vice-Chair will be Dorothy Mason. We are a growing ministry and are eager to have new members join our crew. Our newest members are Alfonso Crooms and Alicia Starnes. We have a role for you. We have people that support us by duplicating, selling, working audio, video or putting labels on cassettes. Contact the church office if you're interested in being a part of the team. We do not restrict on age or ability. So as you can see, we do more than just sit in that little room on Sunday.

YOUTH CHOIR EXPLODES!

By Angela R. Zanders-Polk

Thirteen year old Taleeya Lawrence shook her head in total awe of all the African American's as she took a quick glance at the packed Cicely Tyson High School of Performing and Fine Arts auditorium in East Orange. She marched in unison with her fellow choir members (who each wore their own personal style of blue jeans, crisp white button-down shirts, solid ties arranging in an array of colors from sunshine yellows to crimson reds to ocean blues, and white sneakers) as they made it to the stage for one of the biggest moments of their singing careers. In October, for the first time in history, the Calvary Baptist Church (C.B.C) Youth Choir exploded in a live, "Back to School" gospel recording extravaganza under the tute-



Minister of Music Bryant Richardson

lage of Calvary's Minister of Music, Mr. Bryant Richardson.

Belting out two of Bryant's songs in perfect pitch harmony, the C.B.C. Youth Choir jammed and showed the audience why "The Word Works" and praised their underlying love for God in "Servant." These songs, along with "Souls," "Yet for His Mercy," "Sealed," "It's All About You," and "Holiness Still" were all written by Bryant and performed by other youth choirs from the Morristown/East Orange metropolitan areas. The Saxophonist, James White serenaded the crowd with yet another Bryant original titled "Saxophied Holy," which was a solo gospel jazz groove that led to plenty of hallelujah's and amen's all across the auditorium much like the rest of the songs. All in all, Bryant wrote 95% of all the songs that were performed and recorded. The evening ended with every youth choir teaming up for an old-fashioned grand finale. These



Youth Choir Dir. Dorothy Hollowell

recordings will be released on the live album simply titled "Souls" for all to add to their music collection. Copies of the CD will be available for purchase soon. Contact the church office to request your copy.

"It was just fun seeing the same form of gospel music expressed in different ways," said 11-year-old Morgan Monroe, "Bryant makes it easy for us to sing!" Calvary's Youth Coordinator, Gilbert McCoy called this youth recording a "religious gathering amongst peers" and said, "It was wonderful to have thousands of God's children in one place, singing and doing it more so for the community than the recording." 13-year-old Jasmine Parchment said, "It was a great experience and I am definitely looking forward to the next one." 11-year-old Raven Armstrong echoed Jasmine's words but added, "I liked the fact that it was our first live recording, but meeting people from other places was just as good to me."

Bryant, who used Pastor Carter's sermons along with

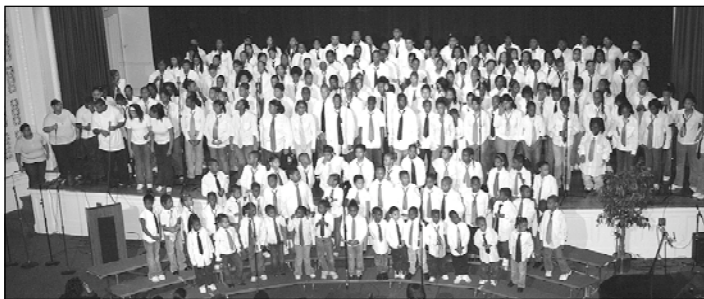
his own personal pain and various circumstances to write the songs, found the live recording to be an over joyous experience for the children. In fact, the reviews were so good that the Cicely



Cecily Tyson Dir. Sandra Barnhard

Tyson School has made it an annual event and added five more Youth Choirs for next year. With his own long awaited album coming out titled, "It's Personal," Bryant will be busy over the next year promoting both albums with his co-director, Sandra Barnhard. Moreover, he will continue doing what he does best, ministering through music to Calvary members and friends.

Although Taleeya enjoyed the "intermingling with other kids that were not from Calvary," she definitely made it clear that for the next Gospel Youth Explosion, she does not want to wear a tie! "I don't think people realize how uncomfortable it is for a girl to wear a tie." Perhaps a scarf would be an easier substitute.



Top left: The Youth Explosion Mass Choir; Bottom left: Youth choir G-Fy-G; Above: Priesthood Record's Distinction

BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE

BREAKING THE CYCLES – WATCHING WHAT YOU WATCH

By Minister David A. Hollowell

“My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children.”

– Hosea 4:6

The passage above is ominous in terms of how our level of knowledge engages us or separates us from the will of God. In this day of the information age, we are totally immersed in knowledge, but unfortunately it is the wrong kind of knowledge. The greatest culprit in supplying us with knowledge that removes God from our consciousness is the television, which bombards us constantly with values and belief systems that are contrary to the teachings of the Bible.

Unlike a few decades ago, when television viewing was an evening affair among families, with limited choices and carefully monitored fare, today cable networks allow raw filth to be pumped into our living rooms and bedrooms 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Insidiously and inexorably, what we watch is having an impact on how we live, how we relate to the world, and how we view God. Unless we make some radical changes, our modern society is headed down a path that will lead us away from God and down a path of moral and social chaos.

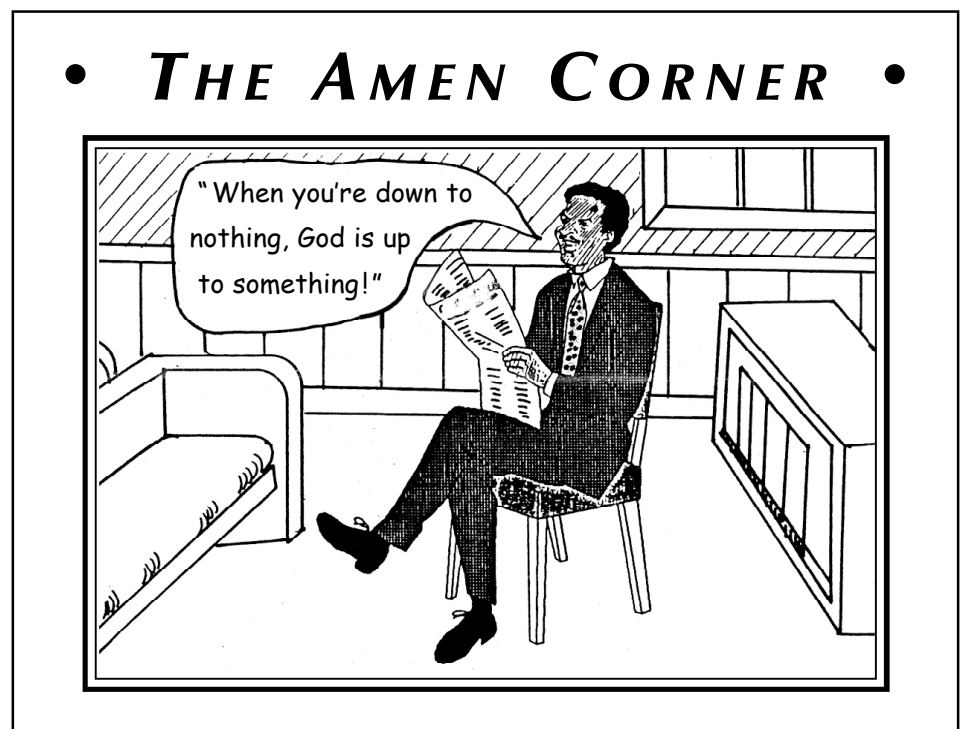
Did you know that by the age of 6, the average American child will have spent more time watching television

than he will spend speaking to his parents in an entire lifetime. What’s the effect? Television has grown from a small and occasional entertainment medium to become a huge industry casting the single most dominating presence in our society. It is no coincidence that the explosion of growth in TV viewing has also paralleled the growth of crime, the deterioration of moral standards, and alienation from God.

Our biggest challenge today is to effectively manage our family’s media consumption. With the proliferation of profanity, sex, drugs, and violence on shows even during the so-called family hour, our children are being exposed to the kind of influences that they would not have encountered in years past until they were young adults. If we are to save this generation, we must not only limit what they

watch, but counter this negativity with positive and edifying teaching from the Bible – the knowledge and practice of godly living.

It’s very important today that we as parents dialogue with our children and expound on how they see what’s going on in life - not to ignore it, not to over-expose it, but to identify it, to recognize it and to bring it into the family conversation. By engaging them by challenging what they see, we can share the most meaningful legacy we can leave them - our values. By encouraging them to think critically about what is conveyed by the media, we can help them understand the difference between good and evil, and help them develop the maturity and discernment to keep a vigilant watch on what they watch.



Member Profile Veronica Capo

By Michele Howe

Several years ago, facing the reality of being infected with HIV/AIDS Veronica Capo found a new home in Morristown and at Calvary Baptist Church. "Like a lot of people growing up, I started drinking in my teens and then smoking marijuana. Eventually, my drugs of choice became heroin and cocaine," said Capo, 47, of Morristown. "I have five biracial children, ages 14 to 27, from three different relationships, who at one time or another have lived in foster homes or with their father's family because I wasn't able to care for them. So, I was already struggling emotionally with the choices I'd made when I found out I had HIV and then AIDS in 1993," she added.

Drug addicted. Sick. Tired. Veronica was living in New York and in a hospital when she learned about services available to people like herself in Morristown and its vicinity. "Someone had a visitor from Morristown who talked about Hope House, a

facility in Dover that offers substance abuse services on an outpatient basis. And, at the time there wasn't much in Brooklyn," Veronica said. Dreaming of a new start in a new place, she began to overcome "a sense of hopelessness" and moved to Morristown and connected with the Department of Social Services and other agencies. "I was able to get help at Hope House, live at the Eric Johnson House in Morristown and obtain a variety of services through the Hyacinth AIDS Foundation in New Brunswick," she said. "In fact, the Hyacinth Foundation has a program for people like me and their families; the infected and affected. While my son, Brian was still in school he spoke to a group at Morristown High School about how this disease affected him personally. His being able to talk about it has lead me to do the same and we began going on speaking engagements together," Capo added. Still, it wasn't enough. She searched for a deeper connection — spiritual one. "I felt I needed to get closer to God. I had been a member of a church in Brooklyn but had begun to feel disconnected

before moving here.

So, after moving and visiting churches in this area, God led me to Calvary. I've been a member seven years now and my connection to the church and the people here have helped me a lot," she said. "Don't get me wrong AIDS is still a death sentence. When I'm in the center of God's will, I'm at peace. I know I'm going to be in a better place someday but right now I'm living and enjoying each day," she added. Asked if she had any advice for readers, Capo thought about the question for a few minutes and responded: "In addition to HIV and AIDS, I ended up with Hepatitis C and liver damage, am on the drug Interferon and take four pills a day to stay alive. People used to be able to pick us out because of telltale signs of lesions on our faces and bodies. That's no longer true. With better drugs, not only are we living longer, we are living better, and, for the most part, undetectable. My advice is to be careful. Stay away from drugs and learn as much about the person you're involved with."

Information on Hope

House can be obtained by calling (973) 361-5555 or on-line at (www.hope-house.org); The Hyacinth Foundation of New Jersey can be reached at 1-800-433-0254 (in NJ only); outside call (732) 246-0204.



AIDS Awareness Tree

World AIDS Day was December 1. Calvary's Touch Ministry had an AIDS Awareness Tree on display in the Mahalia Jackson Fellowship Hall whereby loved ones affected by the disease were remembered by the placement of leaves in their name on the tree, which were then read in a tree lighting ceremony.

Calvary Connection Editorial Policy

Would you like submit articles to the *Calvary Connection* or be part of the writing team? If so, we welcome your submissions and volunteer interest. All we ask is that you (and our existing team members as well) follow the few simple rules in our policy guidelines listed below:

- Please adhere to the deadline for article submission (which is usually the first Sunday of the month before publication). Publication months are quarterly: March, June, September, and December, so articles should be submitted the first Sunday of February, May, August, and November via e-mail to cbcnewsletter@aol.com or on disc in the *Calvary Connection* mailbox.
- Articles should, to the extent possible, touch upon one

of the elements of our church mission, which revolves around the Word, worship, witnessing, and community. All submissions should reflect sound doctrine and should endeavor to edify our readership.

- Be advised that unsolicited articles may not be included in a particular issue if there is a space constraint, but efforts will be made to include it in a timely fashion if deemed appropriate.

- All submissions are subject to editing by the editorial staff for grammar, structure, and occasionally content.

- If you need help putting your thoughts on paper, we have writers available to assist you.

Thank you so much for your interest and cooperation. We welcome the opportunity to share your special gifts with our community of faith, and look forward to hearing from you. Please direct any inquiries to cbcnewsletter@aol.com.

DEVOTIONS

The following pages are heartfelt Advent devotionals written by our very own members. In the spirit of Advent (a time of waiting...) please take some time this holiday season, to pray and reflect on what these scriptures mean to you, and wait on the Lord to "order your steps" in his Word.

The Guiding Light

By LaShon Whitfield

"The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world"
– John 1:9 (NIV)

Growing up in the 70s, I can recall playing outside with friends for hours in the sun, making up games and things to do, living carefree and without worry or concern. However, there came a time in the day when the sun would set, and the night became imminent. And we all would reluctantly remember the directive that we were given earlier that day: "You must come home when the street lights come on."

Why? We were having such a great time! It wasn't fair. But after being disobedient a few times and disregarding our curfews, we understood why: when it became dark, we could not see where we were going. The shadows seemed to grow, and we became fearful of the unknown. But our hope and salvation became that street light. The light illuminated our path, and we were able to see and find our way home. We did not have to be afraid of the shadows and the unfamiliar, because the light dispelled the darkness, taking away the fear and doubt.

Thank God for Jesus Christ! Thank God for that True Light who gives us direction and focus in life! We honor Him, in that we do not have to be misguided and blinded by every distraction that comes along, because we follow the True Light of Life! We worship Him, in that we do not have to be scared of the unknown and unfamiliar, because our True Light leads our lives according to His Way and His Will! And we praise Him, in that we no longer have to live in the "shadows" of past mistakes, and bad decisions, because our True Light transforms us into new creatures!

As children, we did not always adhere to the curfew of the street light, but wasn't it good to know that even if we did NOT obey, someone on the other side of the street light would be calling us home by name!? Thank God that He appoints us to be His Chosen People and His Holy Nation, and He continually calls us into His Wonderful Light! (1 Peter 2:9 (NIV))

Hope + Faith = Grace

By Theresa Wilson

"But now Lord, what do I look for? My hope is in you."

– Psalm 39:7 (NIV)

This scripture became a reality for me in 1999. Early in the year, my husband was diagnosed with prostate cancer. During his recovery period, I received notice I would be laid off from Lucent Technologies, where I had worked for the

past 15 years. "Right Sizing" is the exact term they used to describe it, however, for me it simply meant my final day on payroll would be Nov. 30th. This chain of events took place all within a short few weeks of the other, and I couldn't help but feel a bit overwhelmed, disheartened and uncertain about what the future held for me.

While praising and thanking the Lord that Winston was making a full recovery, I questioned God, "Where and what do I look for?" I was at a point in my life when unemployment was not supposed to be an option. I was fast approaching my 40th birthday, and Christmas was just around the corner. I wanted to know how and why was this happening to me? After all, I was and had been a faithful servant in the kingdom, dedicated and committed to helping my church and church family, "so please Lord, help me understand, why now? Isn't it enough we are dealing with Winston's sickness?" My emotions were running rampant to say the least.

Then my mind began reflecting on one particular Bible study, when Pastor Carter talked about reality and faith not being logical, and generally we can not reconcile one with the other, I thought surely I must be at that point. It was at that moment I realized I was faced with a challenge: Was I really going to step out on faith and trust that God already had the victory won, or was I going to let Satan have his way? See, I asked God to "order my steps", but you have to be very careful when you ask Him to do that. Make sure you are willing to follow where He is about to lead you.

I began to work my plan or so I thought; I reached out to a headhunter to search opportunities only in Charlotte, N.C. or Orlando, FL. This was as good a time as any to finally move back south. Not so fast. The Lord still had things for me to do here in N.J. I applied for a specific job in Charlotte, which had my name written all over it. The headhunter advised me to just interview for the job in the Parsippany office rather than go to Charlotte. I was actually offered the job on the spot in to work in Parsippany! The Lord already had the situation worked out.

I remember during those difficult months, many things emerged to cause my faith to waiver, yet as I went into my Primary I classroom each Sunday, I would see the bright and smiling faces of the children, and it uplifted and encouraged my soul. As I would continue to teach them biblical truths, I later realized why the Lord had not allowed me to move out of N.J., my assignment here was not yet completed. The Lord had not released me to leave without fulfilling my purpose, using my gift to teach the children. It's been 5 years now, and yes with God's help we have survived the storms. I know this is exactly where He wanted me/us to be.

As we approach another advent season, I know without a shadow of a doubt, 'My hope truly is in the Lord'.

DEVOTIONS

Leftovers

By Marsha Webster

“Sing to the Lord a new song ... praise His name; proclaim His salvation day after day.” – Psalm 96:1-2 (NIV)

What do you do with your leftovers? Scrapbook, donate to charity, make soup? Well, this Scripture is a leftover (one of the last picks). When I read it, the words, “day after day” reminded me of something that’s been on my mind lately—the leftovers I’ve been giving to God.

If you can relate to this, you probably have (at some time or another) the same excuses as I do. Kids, work, household chores, procrastination...have taken priority over our quality time with God. The poetic Psalms are so poignant in showing us how to nurture our relationship with Him, but we still continue to “pencil” God in. Yet God’s grace and mercy, is still with us, *day after day*. Now that’s reason enough to sing “Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound,” or “O happy day, when Jesus washed my sins away,” or “His eye is on the sparrow and he watches over me,” not just on Sunday mornings, but *day after day*.

We realize God deserves our sacrifice and commitment to keep Him as the center of our lives, but how can we get out of this rut? We can start by including Him in our daily routine. For example, a morning prayer in the shower instead of mentally organizing your day; listening to a Christian CD instead of the radio or TV; a mid-day devotion instead of going out to lunch; or even a bedtime Bible story with the kids, are all practical opportunities to bridge an estranged relationship with an omnipresent God. Now if I can just practice what I preach.

Aren’t you glad God doesn’t give us His leftovers? He sent us His best: the Prince of Peace, King of Kings, Alpha and Omega, Immanuel, His only begotten Son—just to save me... you... us.

Lord, forgive us for being static Christians. Put a new song in our hearts and a new rhythm in our steps; as the “Godspell” Broadway musical goes...“day by day, oh dear Lord, three things I pray...to see thee more clearly, to love thee more dearly, to follow thee more nearly, day by day.”

A Clear Direction

By Dorothy Mason

“This we proclaim concerning the Word of life...so that you also may have fellowship with us...” – 1 John 1-3 (NIV)

Being presented with this particular passage upon which to share its meaning in my life seems as if it were somehow predestined. As a young Quaker, I came to understand the

Word of life and walking in the light that the 1 John 1 epistle shares – for this is the basic principle upon which the majority of Quaker teachings are founded.

Having the opportunity now to reflect on this passage and where it has brought me since my early Quaker days, I believe that He sent His Son for the purpose of offering eternal life to all who accept it. This particular passage illustrates life and opportunity to develop greater fellowship with Him both now and when I pass on. Some of my experiences which He has brought me through have been an ectopic pregnancy and my first child being stillborn. These were disheartening events, but they were not devastating to me. I felt Him hold me in His bosom while I learned to accept what had occurred. These times gave me greater opportunities to lean on Him, rely upon Him and trust Him. These were deeply experiential teachings for me, which helped me allow Him to direct my future. His comfort was the source in providing me with ever increasing strength to continue and to follow His plan. Therefore, in order to give Him the glory, honor and praise, we named the first one of ours to receive continuous breaths, Aisha, which means life. She was thusly named not only because she was our first “survivor”, but because He gave us her life. This is symbolic to me of His meaning in the Word of Life 1 John 1:1-4, which is a proclamation of His ultimate salvation plan – He makes everything possible for us to have to secure a place with Him eternally.

In 1 John 1:5-10, we are shown the way to achieve this eternal life which is summed up by the symbolic metaphor of Walking in the Light. In my Quaker background I was taught to follow my God conscience in all that I do and give—whenever I encounter the Quaker query check. This is a check to determine if what I am considering would meet with His approval and be displayed favorably in the light He has provided. The Quaker teachings taught that there is no substitute that will excuse a sinful heart and attitude if one’s light is willfully and knowingly obscured.

As A Young Quaker, I sang the George Fox song about walking in the light as a reminder to “do justly, love mercy and to walk humbly with thy God”. It was a reminder of the Light as a circle of protection around us to help us know/remember where we are to go and how we are to conduct ourselves – the circle of light, a constant burning ember to help direct our way during this Advent season and all year through.

DEVOTIONS

Talk Is Cheap

(Christmas Eve)

By Renita Bourgeois

*“For the Kingdom of God is not a matter of talk,
but of power.”* — 1 Corinthians 4:20

I remember once as a young girl my mother received a letter from her sister and she couldn't wait to open it. The eagerness accompanied with her bright wide smile just lit up the room like it was a sunny afternoon day. I felt so happy just watching her read it. I believe that there is a real connection between the one who writes the letter and the one who receives the letter.

To me there's nothing like putting pen to paper. It's a physical thing. I also enjoy sending and receiving e-mails from my family and friends, even though I consider myself to be "old school" when it comes to real letters and notes. I often find my e-mail inbox filled with long stories of tragedies and triumphs, beautiful stories of how God's undoubtedly mercy and grace saved a soul from unbelievable odds or from one particular friend a word of the day, but it's more like a book of the day. I'm so grateful and thankful though to have Christian friends who want to share all facets of God, His message, His word and all kinds of experiences. I read these e-mails with anticipation and encouragement for my own life. I cling to onto every word, follow every turn in the story, celebrate every blessing. Sometimes I'll call the person who sent the compelling e-mail and we'll discuss it, analyze it, what-if-it, and talk about it some more and more.

One day, I took some time to save the documents in a special folder because they were just too precious to delete, but what I realized was that I never really referred back to the saved e-mail at all. To my surprise, I had become an e-mail-biblical-story-laced collector where the only impact was just in the talk and not in the display of God's real power in my life. I mean what's the point of saving it? Talking about what God has done for me is fine and good, but at some point we all need to live His power. 1 Corinthians 4:20 says "for the kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power." I'm so glad that God did more than talk when He gave us Jesus. He brought us power through Christ, and His kingdom to have and behold forever more.

You Better Recognize

(Christmas Day)

By Helen Kimbrough

*“He was in the world, and though the world was made
through him, the world did not recognize him.”* —John 1:10

As Americans, we have just completed an extensive election process...months of registering to vote, months of campaigning, and months of debates on issues such as Iraq, economic depression, the demise of healthcare, etc. Finally, the opportunity to actively vote was upon us. It was great to hear the stories of people exercising their right to vote. What a joy! What an honor! What a privilege! What an opportunity! People in America sought the need and recognized the importance of voting, the importance of taking a stand, and the importance of being counted.

In looking at Jesus' walk on earth, He too tried to appeal to the masses by saying, "I am the bread of life", "I am the door", "I am the prince of peace", "I am the light of the world". However, in His appeal, John 1:10 notes that He was in the world, this world was made through Him (which means that He was apart of this world at the beginning), yet the world that He made did not recognize Him. How awkward to be in such a state where you create a society, yet that society does not acknowledge you or furthermore turns their back on you. This is what happened to Jesus during this time. Ironically, this is what happens to Jesus today.

Presently, we live in a society where we refuse to recognize God as being all-powerful, all-knowing, omnipotent, and omnipresent. In our daily lives, we refuse to invite God into our being, our worship, our work, our play, and our home.

Just like the right to vote is about positioning, our livelihood is about positioning also. We as a people need to learn the power of positioning ourselves with Jesus first. It's not about exhausting our every measure before we go to God, it's about enlisting God's divine measure and help before embarking upon a plan...a goal...a strategy...a step. It's clearly about positioning our thoughts like His thoughts and our ways like His ways. Our lives could be changed and our walk could be altered if only we recognize Him.

In conclusion, we must believe that God's plan is greater than what we can imagine, see, or touch. We must understand that God's plan is not only a physical plan, but a divine plan. This means that God's will for us is infinite. That's why it is so important for us to take a stand, to be counted, and to recognize and position ourselves to Him. God deserves this honor and this exaltation.

DEVOTIONS

New Year, New Blessings

(New Year's Eve/New Year's Day)

By Cheyenne Fulmore

"Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?"
— Isaiah 43:18-19a

I remember my mother telling me years ago when I was about nine years old to have faith and wait on the Lord to send me a blessing. She said: that I should give thanks every day for the new mercies and blessings that He would bestow upon us; to thank Him for such simple mercies as waking us up that day and for the breath of life; and to thank Him for providing us with shelter, food and clothing. Her persistence in encouraging us to be thankful to God was probably due to the fact that we were a large family, and her faith in God gave her the strength to keep pressing on. God made a way for us back then even though it seemed so hard, and I wonder where the strength came from for my parents to manage to provide for us.

As I think back, those former things strengthened me and made me the person that I am today. I do not spend my day dwelling on the struggles of the years gone by because I know the Lord is with me every day. Every day, he shows me new mercy, new grace. The Lord is indeed doing a new thing for me, and He will do the same for you if you believe and trust in Him.

As I think about where God has brought me from, I am truly amazed about how He has used a soul like me (with all my faults and needs) to be blessed and to bless someone else through the various ministries that He allows me to serve in and through my daily walk. Each time that I fall, I liken God's mercy to allow me to rise again to a dry river bed being filled by the spring rains. He showers me with His grace and allows me to rise from past failures. I thank Him for being that ever-flowing river that never goes dry.

As we approach the end of 2004 and move into 2005, I thank Him for allowing me to spring into a new year with the same gratitude that I have for Him allowing me to face a new day! I look forward to the new mercies that He has in store for me and I praise Him for allowing me to worship Him through service!

A Clear Direction

(Epiphany)

By Carol Patterson

"But blessed are your eyes because they see, and your ears because they hear".
— Matt. 13:16

A well-known Chinese proverb says, "When the student is ready, the teacher appears." There are many who consider experience to be the best teacher. As a child of the Most High God, I believe the Holy Spirit is the best teacher.

The Comforter always appears when we are ready. In reality, He's there all the time. But, we don't see, hear, feel or yield to His teaching unless, or until, we're ready. An Epiphany is that moment when we acknowledge the manifestation of the Divine in our lives. It's a moment of extreme clarity. It's like the feeling of satisfaction you get when you finally solve a jigsaw puzzle that's had you perplexed for a long time. All of the pieces were there all of the time. They just hadn't fallen into place.

One of my major Epiphanies came in 1992, when God opened the door of opportunity for me to start my own business. At the time, one of my unsaved business associates would often describe my career as 'charmed' and the commencement of my company as 'luck.' Although I had always known I was guided by the Holy Ghost, I never bothered to correct this woman.

As Christians, we are often told that we shouldn't ever speak of luck because we are blessed. I never understood this because I know that luck is simply a place in time when preparation and opportunity meet. Certainly there's nothing wrong with being prepared. In fact, the Bible instructs to "be ye also ready." And, it's God as the giver of every good and perfect gift, who presents us opportunities.

Yet on the day when my friend came to tour my new offices and told me I was lucky, I yielded to the unction of the Holy Ghost (which had been there all the time) and told her that I was actually blessed by God. It turned out that she was curious about the things of God and had many questions for me. She began to attend Bible Study at her family's church. Shortly thereafter she gave her life to Christ and asked me why I had kept Him a secret for so long. My Epiphany was the realization that Jesus is not a secret savior. He's ours to share.

The Calvary Connection (C²)

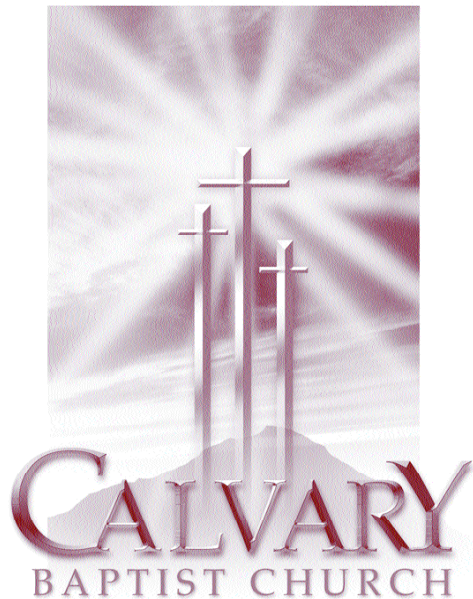
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Submit your ideas and writings to cbcnewsletter@aol.com or put them on a disk and drop it in the C² mailbox.

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Calvary Baptist Church

Making disciples of Christ through
Worship, Word, Witness



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Service - 11:00 a.m.

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Tuesdays - 7:00 p.m.
Wednesdays - noon
Fridays - 6:00 p.m.



Calvary Ministry Expo 2004



Seasoned Saints Dinner attendees



Melissa Carter with Pastor Carter's
mother and sister

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