

WINTER 2009

GRAPEVINE

BIBLE TEACHING RESOURCES
by DON ANDERSON MINISTRIES

Friends come and friends go,
but a true friend sticks by you like family.
—Proverbs 18:24 *The Message*





What a Gift Is a Friend

G. T. Burton in his book of cowboy poetry *Cowpies & Candle Lights* describes friendship in "Two Ol' Hosses":

When they're together workin' cows
it's always head and heel,
don't need to call instructions
because they do it all by feel.
In camp they only mumble
'cause they've said it all before,
and they know the other's feelings
from the skin down to the core.

One lost a wife and baby
in the storms of '68,
and the other rode beside him
trying hard to compensate.
They've partnered nye-on thirty years,
through blizzards, rain, or heat,
and I suppose without the other
one could never be complete.

Now and then they do the town,
but their doin's kind'a slow,
their daily life is so content
the spree is just for show.
If either one could have his wish
they'd stay partners to the end;
just two ol' Hosses getting older
growing closer, friend to friend. (23)



Anita Cornett; Pat and Cindy Hawkins,
20 plus years; Jim and Judy Huffhines;

Garner and Melodye Roberts,
nearly 20 years; Don and Fran
Saddoris; Tres and Julia Ward, 20
plus years; Barry and Julia Watts,
20 years; Brian and Karen Mills.

There's *The Grapevine* staff. My
hats off to you and the tremendous
contribution you've made to our
lives: Jane Rodgers, Keith Yates,
Chip Allen, Gary Gray.

A special tribute goes to Jane as
she has not only been the editor of
The Grapevine, but she and I have
worked together on at least ten
book projects during these years.

There's the office staff: Genevieve
and Billy Martin, 15 years; Donna
White; Bill Lawrence, and Pearl
Anderson. And the volunteer staff:
Michael and Tressa Eddy, Gary and
Anita Cornett, Richard and Patsy
Beene.

We're having a grand opening of
another hall of our hall of heroes,
our loving Hide-a-way family.

The unsung heroes in our hall
of fame are that great company of

When it comes to friends, one writer says: "You need
at least six to carry you out when you find yourself in
permanent parade rest."

I believe every heart has a hall of heroes. The pictures
that hang there are those who signed on and will end up
being pallbearers.

Pearl and I are truly rich! I would at first like to honor
the heroes in my heart, the members of the Bible Teaching
Resources board: Bill and Dorothy Lawrence, 36 years;
Dick and Ethel Knarr, 36 years; John and Loretta Miller,
36 years; Mike and Jane Rodgers, 25 years; Ronnie and
Carol Marroquin, 30 years; Clyde and Kathy Womack, 20
plus years; Jim and Sonia Bilderback, 20 years. Terry and
Laurie Ledbetter, nearly 30 years; Josh and Diana Morriss,
20 plus years; Larry and Joann Watkins, 20 plus years.
Add to that number all these other heroes: Barney and
Sandy Allen, 25 years; Richard and Patsy Beene; Robert
and Lucinda Berry; Tom and Joan Cochran; Gary and

people who have prayed faithfully for us for 36 years and
have also given to make it all possible for the last 36 years.
May God bless you for the vital contributions that you
have made.

Twelve words describing friendship come to mind:
(1) Love; (2) Loyalty; (3) Availability; (4) Communication;
(5) Comfort; (6) Acceptance; (7) Appreciation; (8) Support;
(9) Encouragement; (10) Respect; (11) Defense; and (12)
Family.

A biblical illustration of friendship like none other is
the one between David and Jonathan. 1 Samuel 18:1: "By
the time David had finished reporting to Saul, Jonathan
was deeply impressed with David, an immediate bond
was forged between them. He became totally committed
to David. From that point on he would be David's
number-one advocate and friend" (MSG). The verse
illustrates the process of **bonding** or **love**, resulting in
commitment.

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From the Editor

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, American poet and writer, faced trying times. His wife died tragically; a son was injured severely in the Civil War. In the midst of the national uncertainty and tribulation of the Civil War, Longfellow penned the words to one of our favorite Christmas hymns: "I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day." The third stanza is especially compelling for modern times:

And in despair I bowed my head:
"There is no peace on earth," I said,
"For hate is strong and mocks the song
Of peace on earth, good will to men."

We hope you find our Christmas articles to be blessings. Dan Russ has graciously allowed us to excerpt a portion of his new book *Flesh-and-Blood Jesus*, for our feature article. While theological liberals often emphasize the humanity of Jesus while discounting His divinity, conservative Christians tend to do the reverse. Dallas Theological Seminary graduate and conservative scholar Russ helps us understand what it meant for God Himself to step into human creation in the form of a very real baby. Pat and Cindy Hawkins offer words of encouragement in their letter from the BTR board. Don Anderson salutes the folks who have been involved in BTR for many years. And would it be Christmas without a few cowboy poems?

Thanks to you, our precious friends, for your continued thoughts and prayers. Jesus is the reason for the season...and it is well with our souls.

—Jane Rodgers



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P.O. Box 6611
Tyler, TX 75711-6611
email: Dam@BibleTeachingResources.org
website: www.BibleTeachingResources.org
903.939.1201
FAX 903.939.1204
Toll-free phone:
1.877.DAM.PRAY (1.877.326.7729)



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Flesh-and-



When we reflect on the humanity of Jesus, our minds most easily leap to Jesus, the mature man. This leap is understandable, since most of the four Gospels focus on the adult ministry, teachings, miracles, relationships, suffering, death, and resurrection of our Lord. Only Matthew and Luke record accounts of his birth and a glimpse of his childhood.

What does it mean that Jesus began dwelling among us as baby flesh? The question troubled many of the early church fathers, some of whom tried to deny that Jesus was fully God and fully human. Some were particularly repelled by the idea of the Second Person of the Trinity entering the world through a woman's womb. This ancient heresy, sometimes attributed to Nestorius, is not merely ancient, as I discovered some years ago. As the headmaster of a Christian school, I sent out a yearly Christmas card. One year the poem on the card was "Manger Wetter," a poem by a friend and Lutheran pastor. Most responses I received were positive and polite, but to my surprise, I also received a few stinging letters of rebuke indicating the poet and I had committed a sacrilege by suggesting that the Lord Jesus Christ was a "manger wetter." These pious Christians were repulsed by the truth that Jesus "was made man," beginning like all humanity as a baby.

The Beauty of Baby Flesh

Over the centuries, Christian artists have probably more readily embraced the mystery of God becoming baby flesh than have many Christian theologians. The 17th century English poet John Donne explores the mystery of God as infant powerfully in the second poem of his seven-sonnet cycle entitled "Annunciation":

Salvation to all that will is nigh;
That All, which always is all everywhere,
Which cannot sin, and yet all sins must bear,
Which cannot die, yet cannot choose but die,
Lo! faithful Virgin, yields Himself to lie
In prison, in thy womb....
Immensity cloister'd in thy dear womb

*The following article is adapted from the first chapter of the book **Flesh-and-Blood Jesus: Learning To Be Fully Human from the Son of Man** (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), with permission of the author. We hope you will find this fresh account of the infant Jesus to be a blessing this season. As the title suggests, Dan Russ's emphasis is on the humanity of Jesus, something Christians often misunderstand or even fail to consider at all. How better to learn to be fully human than from the One who embodied sinless humanity, God Himself in mortal flesh? Dan's insights may help us comprehend the mystery of God's becoming one of us, yet without sin—born to live and to die, all for love of a flawed and fallen humankind.*

Blood Jesus

The prophet Isaiah describes a world in desperate need of a savior who will come first as a child, a son: "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given" (Isaiah 9:6). Old Simeon continues with this prophetic imagination when the Gospel of Luke describes this old flesh taking this young infant into his arms, looking the baby in the eye, and, instead of cooing, declaring, "My eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all people, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel" (Luke 2:30-32). He then turns to Mary and Joseph, who marvel at his words, and says, "This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel" (2:34). As this exchange is carried on among the adults, Jesus, we can imagine, is sleeping or looking about him, or even crying. But this does not prevent these adult Jews from seeing in this infant the hope of Israel and the entire world.

By contrast, other stories of miraculous births that were thick in the air when Jesus walked the earth tend toward the miracle child either being born an adult or being born a baby with miraculous powers. An example of the first is the story of the birth of Athena, the Greek goddess of wisdom. She is born from the forehead of her father, Zeus, full of wisdom and divinity. Other cultures feature stories of infants born as demigods. Such infants are almost never described as normal babies, as was Jesus. I suspect this is because most religions and myths cannot comprehend true divinity becoming true humanity. Jesus, by contrast, entered helpless humanity helpless, as real babies really do.

Weak and Needy

Jesus, especially in infancy, was weak and needy. Jesus had to rely on Mary and Joseph, as well as other adults in his extended family, to feed, wipe, and hold him, and until a certain age he could only communicate that need by crying. To be weak and needy, powerless to manage some of life's problems and challenges in one's own strength, is to be human--not a sin. Our Lord was weak and needy, yet without sin.

We are accustomed to referring to God as omniscient, and I have no interest in debunking such a doctrine, but I wonder what meaning "omniscience" has in the case of a baby who in every other way was very much a baby. Do we really want to assert that this baby, though God incarnate, understood in his babyhood how all the cosmos

came into being? Did Mary never teach him everything because he knew it all? This is silly; it defies common sense as well as the Gospel stories. So we are left to believe that Jesus was indeed a baby, much as you and I were once babies with so much to learn.

While his knowledge was limited even as a mature adult, we cannot escape his limited knowledge when a baby. We all accept and celebrate the ignorance of babies, because one of the delights of helping them grow is to witness their constant learning. They begin by knowing little more than their own needs and comforts, crying and cooing for whoever will feed, change, and hold them. Quickly they discover that the people who care for them are specific people: Mom and Dad. The rest of the world is not-Mom and not-Dad. Though we begin our lives in ignorance, eventually the very reality of our not knowing becomes an embarrassment to us, a limit of which we are ashamed and want to hide. But not Jesus. He knew, as a human, that he did not and need not know everything. Satan, by contrast, is a know-it-all, brilliantly described by John Milton in his masterwork, *Paradise Lost*. C.S. Lewis points out in his preface to *Paradise Lost* that, as Milton's Satan travels through the cosmos, everything he sees reminds him of himself: how he feels, what he thinks, what he covets, and what he lost. In other words, everything exists for him and about him.

Jesus, beginning in infancy, sinlessly embodied and later embraced the limits of human knowledge. Even in

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*Jesus was a baby,
much as you and
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FROM THE BOARD

The end of 2008 may mark the most unsettling holiday season that most of us will have ever endured. We have just completed an election season that saw extreme polarization between the two parties, with barely half of the nation's voters supporting the President-elect. The economies of many nations, particularly our own, have come under extreme stress. The stock market is crashing; energy prices are volatile; retail sales are plummeting; people are losing their jobs; banks are failing; companies are losing money; cities, counties, and school districts are falling short in their budgets as tax revenues drop, and "forecasters" predict more hard times are coming.

As we experience this "storm," it even gets personal. We ourselves, or our friends and family members, lose jobs or see decreases in incomes. We watch our 401(k)s become "200.5(k)s," and we see the equity in our homes drop. We realize that we are not financially independent, that we are subject to the swift and unforeseen changes in our economy.

This time of year is also almost always marked by an increase in crime, particularly burglary, theft, and fraud. Economic adversity exacerbates this trend. Just in the last several weeks, one of our daughters had her debit card data "swiped" and funds stolen from her account; another daughter was a victim of internet fraud, and one of our daughters-in-law had her car burgled in front of her house.

Our faith gets tested – we become troubled because our perception that money and possessions are keys to security and freedom doesn't match reality. But our goals of safety and financial security don't align with God's goals for us – God does not want us to be independent; He wants us to be dependent on Him.

When we are dependent on Him, we find comfort in the words of Jeremiah: "Yet this I call to mind and therefore I have hope; because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for His compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness" (Lam.3:21-23). And we find encouragement in the many stories and lessons in His word of His provision and rescue of His people.

This unsettling holiday season should also remind us of the greatest rescue of all time. Walt Henrichsen says that "Christianity is a religion of rescue, designed for the desperate." What an opportunity to share the story of God's gift of His Son, to help others connect the desperation of a bad economy with the desperation of our lost souls without Christ! It reminds us of our own journey to salvation.

We both grew up in homes that we would have described as "Christian." And we both had had experiences that "planted seeds" and "fertilized the soil" of a relationship with Christ. But there had been no harvest. In the spring of 1976, we were invited to a Bible study taught by a traveling teacher named Don Anderson. Long story short, after each lesson, when Don prayed the prayer of salvation, we were so convinced of our need for Christ that we would each, in our own minds, tell God, "If I didn't do it last week, I do it tonight." And finally, to make it official, at one of Don's couples retreats at Kaleo Lodge, we knelt beside our bed and wrote the date in the back of our Bible, so that we would never have a doubt that we had accepted Christ as our Savior.

We have been active participants in Don's ministry ever since. Don's first family camp at Trail West in 1979 is a treasured part of our family memory, and we remember the changes in a number of lives that began on that trip. We attended several family Thanksgiving retreats, each of which built strong values and memories in our children. We also went on a number of couples retreats. Getting to know Don and Pearl, meeting other couples and families, and deepening our knowledge and understanding of the word were just a few of the things we got out of these weekend events. One of Pat's favorite memories is chasing Don for 13.1 miles around a high school track when they were training for a marathon.

We joined the board in 1997, and hosted Don's Wednesday night class in our home and in Pat's bank building for several years. We have been privileged to have Don and Pearl stay in our home when he's been on tour. Experiencing the transition of the teaching part of Bible Teaching Resources to videoconferencing has been interesting – new technology brings opportunity as well as challenge – both are energizing. We enjoy seeing Don's enthusiasm as the ministry reaches us here, close to home, and reaches others around the world.

This holiday season may indeed be troubling to many. But it is Christmas. It's a time when we reflect on our many many blessings, and our greatest blessing of all, the gift of God's Son, whose death rescues us from the penalty of our sin. Our thankfulness for what He has done for us motivates our attitude, our outreach, our service, and our giving. We join the rest of the Bible Teaching Resources board and staff in wishing you and your family a wonderful Christmas and in thanking you for your continued support.

Cindy and Pat Hawkins

The Inspection by Joe Kreger

I woke up early, feelin' fine.
Today, I will turn fifty-nine.
I haven't gathered too much wealth,
but I thanked the Lord for decent health.

I thanked Him for my family,
and I thanked Him for my friends.
I thanked Him for His saving grace
and love that never ends.

I thanked Him for my freedom
and this nation that I love.
I thanked Him for the guidance
that He sends from up above.

Then, I faced the mirror,
my appearance to inspect,
and I noticed then how gravity
was makin' its effect.

Those cheeks that used to ride up there
'bout midway on my face
have slipped down several inches.
They're occupyin' lower space.

As my vision traced the furrows
right above my brow,
I started gettin' curious
'bout where my chin is now.

My chin has kinda melted
into my neck and face,
and several other features
are kinda out of place.

And that carefully trimmed brown mustache
disappeared and went away.
It was replaced by another
that is sorta dingy gray.

I see spots above my forehead
where the hair no longer grows,
but I'm raisin' me a bumper crop
right from my ears and nose.

Lingerin' at the mirror
is not what I often do,
But today I'm kinda sobered
by what's comin' in to view.

But, in another way, it's funny,
seein' things a bit amiss,
that in our age of dignity
we start to look like this.

I never did believe it.
I thought it was a rumor.
But I almost am persuaded
that God has a sense of humor.

(Still Lookin' by Joe Kreger) St. Louis, MO: Doane Agricultural Services Company. Copyright – Joe Kreger (poetry) and Doane Agricultural Services Company (book), 2000. 110-111. Used by permission.

Some of our favorite letters from the **MAILBAG**

I visit family, in Hide-a-way several times a year. I am interested in all the *Grapevine* magazines from 2005-2008. There is a wealth of information.

Thanks for the 5 CDs. We have already shared one with a couple who have a real interest in what we told them about the message. One will go to our daughter and another to our two sons as soon as I get some mailing envelopes. God bless both of you for all that you do.

Thanks a million. They [past email messages] are so inspirational. I love them and pass them on to friends. Thanks for your promises of yesterday! A great help as is all of God's word and your synopsis of it is a real blessing.

Hi, my name is Lisa Anderson, and my late husbands name is Don Anderson. He passed away December 17, 2007, of pancreatic cancer. He was 40 years old. We had only been married 2 years when he passed away. I have been having a hard time dealing with his death and I just typed in "Where has Don Anderson gone?" [on the computer]. And up you came. I did order one of your books, I feel it was a sign from God for me to find you and to read this book. My husband, Don, was a Christian and he saw the disciples and also God and Jesus before he died. I myself am struggling somewhat since losing Don and I am trying not to lose my own faith. I know in my heart that he is with Jesus. It's just so hard to be without him.



Recipes by Robichaux

Our Christmas gift to you is the recipe for Johnnie's heavenly cinnamon rolls. We guarantee your family will

awaken extra early on Christmas morning with the aroma of these delicious edibles (as if anyone needed help getting up early). Ah, we can smell them already! At our retreats at Kaleo Lodge, Johnnie offered these cinnamon rolls by the bag to take home.

Cinnamon Rolls

Mix:

- 4 cups flour
- 1/4 cup sugar
- 1 teaspoon salt

Cut 1 cup butter (softened) into mix.

Stir in combined mixture of:

- 1 cup milk
- 3 beaten egg yolks
- 1 heaping tablespoon yeast

dissolved in 1/2 cup of warm water

Mix thoroughly and refrigerate overnight.

Roll out dough in jelly roll fashion; spread melted butter on top; sprinkle with sugar and cinnamon mixed together; and sprinkle chopped pecans on top.

Roll up lengthwise as tightly as possible. Slice and place in cup cake pans that have been oiled or sprayed with non-stick spray. Let rise until double in size and bake in a 350 degree oven for about 20 minutes. Ice while still warm with a mixture of powdered sugar, melted butter, vanilla flavoring and half-n-half blended to the desired consistency.

(Originally published in the winter 1991 *Grapevine*)

Media Update

Mp3 downloads via the BTR webstore are available. This feature will allow you to go online, purchase and download Don's messages directly to your computer or Mp3 player for half the price!

Now available in time for Christmas are the Mp3 series collections. Entire collections (Biblical Biographies, Books of the Bible, and Topical Studies) are available in an Mp3 format and packaged in a handy travel case. All sets come with a separate CD containing the study guides for you to view on your computer or print out. Order online at www.BibleTeachingResources.org or use the form on page 10.

Videoconferencing Equipment Update

We now have two receiving units and the broadcast unit so that Don can teach classes via videoconferencing. The reintroduction of the St. Andrews class in downtown Fort Worth was a great success during the fall tour. Please pray for funding for additional class locations. Our goal is to have classes in Temple, Granbury, Sherman, and Waco in the near future.

ACH: automatic donation plan

We are still offering automatic withdrawals from your bank account for monthly contributions. A form authorizing such withdrawals can be found on page 9. If you are interested in giving using this program, simply fill in and sign the form, attach a voided check, and mail both to our office. If you have any questions, please call us toll free at 1.800.326.7729. We are very thankful for all those who give and we hope this will make things easier for those who prefer the automatic donation method. Currently we have only a few individuals who have requested this form of contributing. If you are interested in finding out more about ACH, please let us know.

Catch Don!

Sundays, 8:00 a.m. & 10:45 a.m. services @ Hide-a-way Lake Community Church. 1500 Lake Park Circle, Hideaway, TX 75771.

Couples Conference, May 22-24, 2009 @ Summers Mill. Register online at www.BibleTeachingResources.org or use the form on page 10.

Trail West Family Camp, August 17-22, 2009 @ Buena Vista, Colorado. Register online at www.BibleTeachingResources.org or use the form on page 10.

OnePlace.com

New messages are available each Monday by visiting "Persevering and Pressing On" on www.OnePlace.com. There is a quick link on our website to take you directly to Don's studies. A free study guide is also provided.

Radio Ministry

November 3, 2008, marked the first live broadcast of Don's teachings on station 105.3, Mindnao Praise Radio, in the Philippines! Please join us in praying for this very timely ministry. If you would like to help with this important project, contributions can be directed by noting on your check that your gift is for the "radio ministry."

Weekly e-Letter

For many of you, Don & Pearl's weekly e-letter has been a blessing. We have done our best to collect email addresses and add people to our distribution list. If you would like to receive these articles/updates, please let us know by calling the office or by sending a quick email to us: gen@bibleteachingresources.org.



Pearl's Reflections

by Pearl Anderson

Store shelves stocked with Christmas items in October! Preparations for Christmas before Thanksgiving used to be a talking point in the past! We don't "do" Halloween, so that is not a problem.

There has always been conjecture about the actual birthday of Jesus. Perhaps it was in October. Interestingly, Julie Ackerman Link states: "...there may be a legitimate reason to celebrate Christmas in October...His birth may have been in the autumn, when the weather was still warm enough for the shepherds to be outdoors with their flocks. We know that Jesus was crucified on Passover, and that the Holy Spirit came on Pentecost. So some scholars have reasoned that Jesus' birth may have occurred on another Jewish holiday, the Feast of Tabernacles, or Sukkot" (*Our Daily Bread*, October 15, 2008).

Whichever the date, let's celebrate the birth of our Savior, Redeemer, Risen Lord, Coming Again One.

May this Christmas of 2008 be a special time with your family and friends. May your celebration have as a focal point, centerpiece, and cornerstone, the birth of the Holy Child: the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

ACH - Automatic Donation Plan

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I hereby authorize Bible Teaching Resources to withdraw the amount indicated below from my checking account at the bank shown on the voided check, beginning in the month of _____.

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Registration & Order Form

CONFERENCES

- Couples Conference @ Summers Mill *
—May 22-24, 2009: \$350/couple
- Trail West 2009*
—August 17-22, 2009

MP3 AUDIO COLLECTIONS (in travel cases)

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- Biblical Biographies \$70
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* You will be contacted by our conference registrar for additional information.

Prison Ministry: Life Recovery

My name is Kelli.... I am currently incarcerated at the Hill County Jail in Hillsboro, Texas. I have been here for four months and will be here awhile longer. A fellow inmate gave me your address. She told me that I could write and request a *Life Recovery Bible* that has a study guide and other religious material. I know about God and what has been done for the people on earth. I would like to have a Bible that I could read. I would like to get a better insight of what the Bible is, its meaning, and a better understanding of what has been done for me and what could very well be in store for me, if I would just accept. I would appreciate any materials that would help me in my journey forward with God. Thank you. Please keep me in your prayers, too! God bless you all!

I would greatly appreciate if you can send me *The Life Recovery Bible*. I'm in recovery and I'm really tired of this cycle that has haunted me most of my life. When I came into my dorm here at S.A.F.P., my friend shared with me his Bible. Let me say that tears would not stop. It makes so much sense and how it's based out of recovery. I wanted to write it all down but my friend gave me the address hoping I will also get one. I'm also interested in any brochures you might have. Thank you! May God bless us!

Your brother in Christ, Henry....

Henry's and Kelli's letters above are among the hundreds received at the Bible Teaching Resources offices from inmates of Texas correctional institutions this year. As the letters so poignantly illustrate, the need for spiritual guidance is great for those incarcerated in our nation's jails and prisons. Their lives regulated by the justice system, inmates combat loneliness, fear, uncertainty...and their receptiveness to the things of God often increases manifold as they are confined. Word of mouth has spread the news among Texas jails and prisons...and a project at Bible Teaching Resources that started with a few letters asking for help some years ago has grown exponentially. Under the direction of Pearl Anderson, BTR tries to honor each request for Bibles, Bible study materials, and other Christian literature. This year alone, we have mailed over 700 Bibles—accompanied by nearly 2500 pieces of Christian literature—to inmates in facilities across Texas. Tyndale's *Life Recovery Bible*, with accompanying workbook and devotional, is most frequently requested. We believe its unique blend of practical 12-step advice and scriptural principles, combined with God's word, is particularly useful for ministering to inmates. If you would like to contribute to the ongoing prison ministry of Bible Teaching Resources, please send a designated gift to our offices. May God bless you for helping us distribute God's word to men and women searching to start their lives anew.

***365 Days of Hope: Encouragement for Those Facing Loss, Pain, and Disappointment* by Joni Eareckson Tada and Dave & Jan Dravecky (World Vision Press)**

I was initially attracted to this work because I have read two of Joni Eareckson Tada's other daily devotional books. Dave and Jan Dravecky have been through so much with Dave's cancer and the amputation of his pitching arm. Dave, Jan, and Joni know what it means to suffer great difficulty. For the May 11 selection, Joni quotes Mother Teresa: "A joyful heart is the normal result of a heart burning with love." Jan Dravecky writes, for June 19: "Dave's surgery was a one-time deal; the surgery God was doing on my sinful nature was ongoing. But we both came through our respective surgeries in the protective care of our heavenly Father."

***The Loveliness of Christ: Extracts from the Letters of Samuel Rutherford* selected by Ellen S. Lister (Banner of Truth Trust)**

This little book is a real treasure. Samuel Rutherford lived in the 1600s. I have personally noted 63 statements of Rutherford that I have copied and intend to meditate upon. Let me entice you with one small morsel from his pen: "It maketh not much what way we go to heaven; the happy home is all, where the roughness of the way shall be forgotten. He is gone home to a friend's house, and made welcome, and the race is ended" (68-69).

***Flesh-and-Blood Jesus: Learning To Be Fully Human from the Son of Man* by Dan Russ (Baker)**

Flesh-and-Blood Jesus (excerpted in this issue of *The Grapevine*) carefully examines the humanity of Jesus throughout His childhood, adulthood, death and resurrection, exploring themes such as frailty, the need for companionship, feasting, dying, living with wounds, responding to authority. By delving into areas of Jesus' life that are often overlooked, you will emerge with a deeper understanding of how Jesus embraced his humanity. And you will learn how to embrace your own humanity with all its messiness and joy. Os Guinness writes, "This book is a little gem—rich with quiet wisdom and deep insights, and beautifully written. This is a book to read slowly and savor long." This sounds like another great book to be reading while you're doing your devotional times. Many of our readers will remember Dan Russ from Pine Cove days and later as headmaster of Trinity Christian Academy. Today he is affiliated with Gordon College in Boston.

***"What Does Jesus Say About...": Christ Speaks To Us Today* by Cecil Price (AMG)**

This 1,900 page masterpiece will serve you well in your personal study of the Lord Jesus Christ. Charles Dyer says: "WWJD? (What Would Jesus Do?) is more than just a great sentiment. God calls on Christians to be like Jesus. And yet, it's hard to know what Jesus would do in any given situation if we can't remember what He said. ... Cecil Price provides an A-to-Z compendium of Jesus' teachings on a wide variety of issues and topics. This is a handy reference tool for anyone seeking to know what Jesus said about life's crucial issues." Great work, Cecil, and I trust God is going to really pour out His blessing not only upon you, but also upon all those who use this book to facilitate a deeper understanding of our blessed Lord Jesus. Cecil Price is on the staff of Christian Information Ministries.

***Toxic Leaders: How To Work for Flawed People in Churches, Schools, and Christian Organizations* by Kenneth O. Gangel (Wipf & Stock)**

Gangel says in the introduction: "This book makes clear that we face the problem of toxic leadership in the church at a very real and present level, yet over 90% of the pastors, elders and deacons in North America will not read Lipman-Blumen's work nor see this one either, so the disease created by toxicity persist" (xiii).

***Looking for God: An Unexpected Journey Through Tattoos, Tofu & Pronouns* by Nancy Ortberg (Tyndale)**

This was my first exposure to Nancy Ortberg's writings, although I have been a fan of John Ortberg's works for years. Initially, I took issue with some of the hard things Nancy was saying, but upon reflection, I could see her points.

In one section of the book, she describes a dramatic set of circumstances concerning a terminally ill single mother with two children and many needs. Nancy recalls that she made a big list of all of the things she planned to do to help the lady and her children. What did she eventually do to help? She confesses in the book, "I'll tell you. I did absolutely nothing. I don't mean that I did absolutely nothing, and then I got started. I mean I did absolutely nothing. Ever" (106). Nancy's honesty rings true for many a Christian for whom good intentions remain just that—only good intentions. You will love Nancy's transparency. This is an excellent read.

HOMEWORK

Christmas Picks

Mom, Dad, Grandpa, Grandma—are you looking for just the right gift for that special teenager this Christmas? We surveyed a sampling of 40 North Dallas Christian school teens to see what they hope to find under the Christmas tree this year. Not surprisingly, clothes and shoes topped the list for girls. Boys favored cash and video or computer games in about equal proportion. Here they are, in order of preference.

Girls

Clothes & shoes

iPods

DVDs

Guys

Video & computer games

Cash

Cars & car/truck accessories



Electronics—especially iPhones, laptops, digital cameras, TVs—also appeared frequently on both lists, as did CDs and music downloads. Girls also wanted perfume, jewelry, and money while boys hoped to get new pets or guitars.

Keeping Jesus in the Season

Our teens surveyed were also asked how their families honor Christ during the holiday season. Most reported that their families attended Christmas or Christmas Eve church services and read scripture together, including the Christmas story. Other traditions included setting up front yard nativity scenes, using advent calendars, baking birthday cakes for Jesus, filling shoeboxes with treats for Operation Christmas Child.

Flesh-and-Blood Jesus

continued from page 5

his messianic manhood he freely, without shame or guilt, replied to his disciples' question about when the final judgment would occur that "no one knows about that day or hour....only the Father" (Matthew 24:36).

The Hope in Need

When Jesus was born, Mary, Joseph, and a handful of others knew that this child was the hope for Israel and the world. Against common sense and ruthless opposition they trusted God's leading and protection with that hope in mind. Just as Jesus grew in knowledge and wisdom, he must have grown in hope. From the cradle he learned to hope that his crying would bring his mother to feed him and that his neediness would cause Joseph to protect and provide for him. For hope is that deep assurance that more is yet to come, in physical growth and sustenance, in knowledge and in wisdom, and in love.



Dan Russ is the Director of the Center for Christian Studies at Boston's Gordon College where he also serves on the faculty. From 2002-2003 he was the Executive Director of *Christians in the Visual Arts*, an international arts organization housed at Gordon. Dan holds a B.A. in English from the University of Evansville, a M.A. in Biblical Studies from Dallas Theological Seminary, a M.A. in English from the

University of Dallas, and a Ph.D. in Literature and Psychology from the University of Dallas.

Dr. Russ was headmaster of Trinity Christian Academy, a K-12 college preparatory school in Addison, Texas, a suburb of Dallas, from 1994-2002. He is a fellow of the Dallas Institute of Humanities and Culture, where he served as managing director and faculty member for five years. There he founded Studies in Leadership, a program affording business, professional, and civic leaders the opportunity to re-envision their leadership in light of the wisdom of the classics. He also serves as a senior fellow, moderator, and academic consultant for the *Trinity Forum*, a Christian university without walls for business, civic, and professional leaders. Texans may also remember Dan from his days at Pine Cove in the 1980s.

Dr. Russ has contributed to a number of books on classics, biblical studies, and cultural leadership. His book *Flesh-and-Blood Jesus: Learning To Be Fully Human from the Son of Man* was published by Baker in July 2008. Dan's essay on the Psalms will appear in a forthcoming book on lyric poetry.

Dan and his wife, Kathy, have four grown children and two grandchildren. The Russes live in Danvers, Massachusetts.

The book *Flesh-and-Blood Jesus* is available at discounted prices from Amazon.com and Christian Book Distributors (www.christianbook.com). Dan Russ welcomes comments and feedback from readers. You may contact Dr. Russ at the following e-mail address: dan.russ@gordon.edu.

Ruth 1:16-17: "But Ruth said, "Don't force me to leave you; don't make me go home. Where you go, I go; and where you live, I'll live. Your people are my people, your God is my god; where you die, I'll die, and that's where I'll be buried, so help me GOD—not even death itself is going to come between us!" (MSG).

1 Samuel 19:1-7 records Jonathan's protection of David when Saul threatened to kill the future king of Israel: "Jonathan sent for David and reported to him everything that was said. Then he brought David back to Saul and everything was as it was before" (19:7 MSG). Jonathan's actions exemplify the **loyalty** and **support** of friendship.

1 Samuel 20:1-4 records Jonathan's response when David reveals that Saul yet plans to kill him. Jonathan simply says, "Tell me what you have in mind. I'll do anything for you." (20:4 MSG). Here Jonathan proves his friendship by making himself completely available. He might just as easily have said, "I will drop everything if you need me." He **communicates** with and he **comforts** David in difficult circumstances.

1 Samuel 20:13: "May GOD do his worst to me if I let you down! If my father still intends to kill you, I'll tell you and get you out of here in one piece. And GOD be with you as he's been with my father!" (MSG). Here Jonathan proves his friendship by **defending** David and **accepting** the responsibility for his protection and survival.

1 Samuel 20:41-42: "After the servant was gone, David got up from his hiding place beside the boulder, then fell on his face to the ground, three times prostrating himself! And then they kissed one another and wept, friend over friend, David weeping especially hard. Jonathan said, 'Go in peace! The two of us have vowed friendship in GOD's name, saying, "GOD will be the bond between me and you, and between my children and your children forever!'" (MSG). Here Jonathan treats David like **family**. He shows great **appreciation** for David.

1 Samuel 23:16-18: "Jonathan, Saul's son, visited David at Horesh and encouraged him in God. He said, 'Don't despair. My father, Saul, can't lay a hand on you. You will be Israel's king and I'll be right at your side to help. And my father knows it.' Then the two of them made a covenant before GOD. David stayed at Horesh and Jonathan went home." (MSG). Jonathan's actions indicate **support**. Jonathan gives his **encouragement** to his friend and shows great **respect** and amazing unselfishness by telling David that David will be the next king.

2 Samuel 1:25-26: "The mighty warriors, fallen, fallen in the middle of the fight! Jonathan, struck down on your hills! O my dear brother Jonathan, I'm crushed by your death. Your friendship was a miracle-wonder, love far exceeding anything I've known, or ever hope to know." (MSG)

Proverbs 18:24: "Friends come and friends go, but a true friend sticks by you like family" (MSG).

Baxter Black has written a great piece of cowboy poetry called "Take Care of Yer Friends."



Friend is a word that I don't throw around
Though it's used and abused, I still like the sound.
I save it for people who've done right by me
And I know I can count on if ever need be.

Some of my friends drive big limousines
Own ranches and banks and visit with queens.

And some of my friends are up to their neck
In overdue notes and can't write a check.

They're singers or ropers or writers of prose
And others, God bless 'em, can't blow their own nose!
I guess bein' friends don't have nothin' to do
With talent or money or knowin' who's who.

It's a comf'terbul feelin' when you don't have to care
'Bout choosin' your words or bein' quite fair
'Cause friends'll just listen and let go on by
Those words you don't mean and not bat an eye.

It makes a friend happy to see your success.
They're proud of yer good side and forgive all the rest
And that ain't so easy, all of the time
Sometimes I get crazy and seem to go blind!

Yer friends just might have to take you on home
Or remind you sometime that you're not alone.
Or ever so gently pull you back to the ground
When you think you can fly with no one around.

A hug or a shake, whichever seems right
Is the high point of givin', I'll tellya tonight,
All worldly riches and tributes of men
Can't hold a candle to the worth of a friend. (122)

Cow Pies & Candle Lights by G. T. Burton. G. T. Burton, Benton, AR. © 1996. G. T. Burton.

Coyote Cowboy Poetry by Baxter Black. Coyote Cowboy Company: Brighton, CO. © 1986, Baxter Black.

COMING UP!

Trail West, Buena Vista, Colorado August 17-22, 2009

I find myself singing with John Denver: "Gee, it's good to be back home again." For years we did camps at Trail West and now we get to return. Won't you join us next summer at Buena Vista, Colorado?

What a beautiful facility it is!

Everything is falling into place for picnicking, river rafting, square dancing, fishing, Frisbee golf, mountain climbing, volleyball, swimming, sauna, hot tub, a day trip to Aspen over Independence Pass.

Larry & Mary Kent will lead in worship. Russell Newport will thrill your hearts with special solos, and Don Anderson will teach the word. Yahoo!



Families, couples, single adults—everyone will find something to love at Trail West. All are welcome!

Cost for the week, including a 5 night stay, 14 meals, and program fees is \$900/couple. Additional persons in the same room (up to two) are \$200/each.

Special excursions such as rafting with Noah's Ark are available for an

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2008 Winter Videoconference & Live Tour

**6 Week study in the Lives of Isaac & Jacob
January 12-February 26, 2009**

MONDAY- January 12 & 26, February 2, 9, 16 & 23 (VIDEOCONFERENCE)

12:20 p.m.—Ft. Worth Businesspeoples Noon Class
St. Andrew's Episcopal Church, 10th & Lamar
Ft. Worth, TX 76102
Garner Roberts, office: 817.763.5831
(Lunch available at 11:50 a.m.)

THURSDAY- January 15 & 29, February 5, 12, 19 & 26 (LIVE)

7:00 p.m.—Tyler Evening Class
Hide-A-Way Lake Community Church
1500 Lake Park Circle, Hideaway, TX 75771
Bible Teaching Resources office: 903.939.1201
Class hosts:
Doug & Alice Byrd, home: 903.882.1419
John & Kay Loucks, home: 903.882.7432

Please note: There will be no classes on January 19 or 22.

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