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EDITORIAL STAFF

Baraka G. Muganda
DEPARTMENT DIRECTOR
mugandab@gc.adventist.org

Jonatán Tejfel
EDITOR
tejelj@gc.adventist.org

Hiskia I. Missah
ASSOCIATE EDITOR
missahh@gc.adventist.org

Maria A. Dunchie
LAYOUT & DESIGN, EDITORIAL ASSISTANT
dunchiem@gc.adventist.org

Kimberly Luste Maran
COPY EDITOR

EDITORIAL ADVISORS

Jan Paulsen
Matthew A. Bediako
Robert E. Lemon
Armando Miranda

REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVES

Mulumba Tshimanga • East-Central Africa Division
bresilien54@yahoo.com

Corrado Cozzi • Euro-Africa Division
corrado.cozzi@euroafrica.org

Peter Sirotkin • Euro-Asia Division
psirotkin@ead-sad.ru

Bernardo Rodriguez • Inter-American Division
bernardo@interamerica.org

Balvin B. Braham • Inter-American Division
brahambb@interamerica.org

James Black • North American Division
james.black@nad.adventist.org

Manny Cruz • North American Division
manny.cruz@nad.adventist.org

Dong Hee Shin • Northern Asia-Pacific Division
joshuashin@nsdadventist.org

Otimar Gonçalves • South American Division
otimar.goncalves@dsa.org.br

Gilbert Cangy • South Pacific Division
grcangy@adventist.org.au

Nickolas Kross • South Pacific Division
nkross@adventist.org.au

Jobbie Yabut • Southern Asia-Pacific Division
jyabut@ssd.org

Lionel F. Lyngdoh • Southern Asia Division
lyngdoh@sud_adventist.org

Paul Tompkins • Trans-European Division
ptompkins@red-adventist.org

Eugene Fransch • Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division
FranschE@sid.adventist.org

John Enang • Western Africa Division
njenang@wad-adventist.org



gold frankincense and myrrh

By Jonatán Tejfel

‘the gold, frankincense, and myrrh, represented an aspect of who Jesus is and what His mission was to fulfill.’

I was in Barcelona, Spain. It had been a hard summer, full of activities, and I had just finished the final activity: camping in the mountains with young people. The event had been a total success, but I was tired. I arrived home and had one thought in my mind: to rest! The following day I would drive to my parents' house where my wife was staying. She was about to give birth—I was extremely excited because I was going to see my wife and meet our new baby, our first child, our daughter Astrid.

Soon after falling asleep I received a call from my parents...my wife was at the hospital ready to deliver the baby. I was almost 400 kilometers (249 miles) away from the hospital. I got up quickly and in two minutes my suitcase was ready. I drove as fast as I could to see my wife, and, maybe witness the birth of our first child....Tears of joy rolled down my face as I held my daughter in my arms...the end result of love.

As I thought about this experience, my mind went back to another birth that happened more than 2,000 years ago. It's one of the most fascinating stories in the Bible, the birth of Christ and the visit from the Wise Men.

These Wise Men were waiting for the birth of someone very special, the King of Kings. They had studied in detail and received the message from heaven through the star, which indicated where *this* special child should be born. With the hope of meeting the “King of the Jews” (Matt. 2:2), they immediately packed for the long trip. They took with them gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh to present to the baby Jesus. They went to Jerusalem seeking the newborn king of Israel but they didn't find Jesus there. They traveled again and arrived in Bethlehem to search for Jesus. When they found Him they presented Joseph and Mary with the gifts they bought for the King.

Each one of the three gifts, the gold, frankincense, and myrrh, represented an aspect of who Jesus is and what His mission was to fulfill.

- 1) **Gold:** The gift of gold was often reserved for royalty. The Magi told King Herod that they had come to see the one born King of the Jews. The Magi brought gold in some form, whether it was jewelry, coins, or just pieces, we are not told. This gift represented Jesus' royalty. It is significant because it shows that the Wise Men recognized Jesus as a King.
- 2) **Frankincense:** The gift of frankincense is unusual. Frankincense was a highly valued and rare commodity. The Israelites had a common use for frankincense that was directly connected to the worship of God. In the Sanctuary when they were in the desert and later in the Temple, the Jews prayed before the Altar of Incense, which was always kept burning. The substance burned on that altar was frankincense. When frankincense is burned it gives off a very sweet smelling white smoke. The smoke rising from the Altar of Incense represented the prayers of the people rising to God in heaven. The only use of frankincense for Jews was at this altar and it was reserved for the worship of God. The Magi presenting this gift to Jesus shows that they knew that He was indeed divine. (They had studied the scriptures and knew that the prophecies pointed toward the birth of *Someone* special.)
- 3) **Myrrh:** At first glance, myrrh seems the most odd of all the gifts. Myrrh also was extremely valuable and had a number of uses. The most common use was for aromatic purposes, to give the sweet smell of perfumed fragrance.

Although myrrh was sometimes used in the homes of the wealthy to create a sweet and pleasant fragrance it was usually reserved for special occasions. (Four years ago while visiting Egypt I bought Myrrh perfume—the odor is extremely sweet.) One of the major uses of myrrh was for burials. Myrrh was placed on the cloths used to wrap the bodies for burial to help delay the smell of decay following death. The Magi presented this gift to Jesus as a symbol that He would one day die.

In remembrance of these gifts, at Christmastime we present gifts to the people we love. But many times we somehow forget the most important thing that the giving should represent —giving our best to Jesus, the King of Kings. We have always talked about three gifts for the new born king of the Jews, but we forget to talk about the fourth gift the Wise Men offered to Jesus.

After they gave their gifts to Mary and Joseph, they worshipped the baby Jesus. This is the best gift we can offer this Christmas to the people we love and the best gift we can offer to Jesus. The gift of worship to Jesus, and Jesus only. He is worthy of our worship and our praise. We need to proclaim that Jesus is our King and only to Him is our praise and worship offered. ●



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COVER by Jonatán Tejel ● **visit us online at** www.youth.gc.adventist.org

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Kimberley Tagert-Paul is free-lance writer and author working from Muskegon, Michigan. She has had the privilege of publishing over 350 articles/ stories/ devotionals, but enjoys writing for young people the most. [pp. 20-25; 30-32]

A regular contributor to *Accent*, **Patti Emanuele** is a freelance writer and author of three books who has contributed to *Guide* magazine and many other Christian and non-Christian publications. [pp. 14-18; 26]



Gina Wahlen enjoys meeting people from around the world and has lived in many wonderful places such as Russia, England, the Philippines, California and Nebraska! She currently lives in Maryland where she writes about people, adventures, and God. She and her husband, Clinton, have been married nearly 25 years and they have a son, Daniel, 17, and daughter, Heathe, 11. [p. 10]

Debbonnaire Kovacs has been writing since she could hold a pencil, and sold her first story to *Guide* magazine when she was eleven years old. She has written over eleven books and nearly 100 stories and articles, including lots of stories for *Primary Treasure*. Mrs. Kovacs strongly encourages young people to follow their dreams, and not wait until they are grown up to do something God is calling them to do. [pp. 11-14]



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- 2010 Senior Youth Week of Prayer Sermons
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- Junior Youth Devotional on Identity



THE CHRISTMAS GIFT

Kimberley Tagert-Paul

He lays on His back in the straw, looking about with wide eyes at the sheep that stand staring back at Him. He kicks His feet and stretches His arms, tiny fists flailing into the wind. The quiet is punctuated with the bleating of sheep. His mother rests against a bed of straw, His father watches them both and marvels at what has just taken place. Here, among the smelly sheep and the dank earth, a baby has been born. But not any baby. This one is a king. But not any king. He is the King! Joseph knows this in his heart—and so does Mary resting after the arduous ordeal. The long awaited King has come—but not to a palace—not to a gold encrusted bed with servants attending to His every need. He has come to the most humble of settings to begin His mission.

Why a manger instead of a great palace? Why must His birth be so humble? Why was the wonderful news shared with shepherds and not to the kings? Why didn't His own people seek Him instead of Wise Men? Why the little town of Bethlehem? Why would God choose such things for Himself?

John 1:1-3: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made."

This tiny babe, that lay surveying the very world He created, was there at the beginning of it all. His thoughts went into the planning, His dreams into the anticipation, His heart into molding of each element, and His love into the making of each creature until, at last, two stood in His very image, and He smiled upon them.

What would it have been like to stand beside Him—to peer over His shoulder as the very finger of God stirred about our galaxy and created the stars, calling each by name? What would it have been like to see the first sunset, the first dawning of day? What would it have been like to stand next to the Master Designer and watch Him smile His delight upon His children, and know that someday, He too would take their form and be born among the very sheep He had just created?

The Godhead had planned for this creation. In their hearts they knew what they would design—a man that would stand in their image. Oh, they could hardly wait. But first, they must create a place for him and give him all that he would need. So, they started with the light, separating it from the darkness to give him a sense of time. They

planned a place to give him fresh air for the lungs that They had designed. They gave him land, rich soil to produce the crops that would nourish the body system drawn by God's own finger. They gave him the gentleness of the ground that would cradle him as he slept under the stars They called by name. And when They looked around at what they had planned and created, and saw that everything was ready for him—their crowning creation—They said, "It is good." Then, and only then did They create man and woman, and celebrate together.

What about the plan? The one made before the first clouds were blown into place by the breath of God? It included with it the salvation of man. The tempter, having traveled among the galaxy of stars and other planets, had tried to distract other *beings* from their devotion to the Father of all. But none had fallen with him or his angels. There remained one last place, so new from the Creator's hand that maybe their innocence would trip them up. Maybe their devotion so new and untested would prove the place where he could reign. He knew God's plan—why not put it to the test?

If we would marvel at the wonder of creation, we must also grieve at the sight of God's heart being broken as He walked in the garden and called for His son Adam by name. And found him, there, hidden.

From *The Desire of Ages* (p. 22):
"God did not ordain that sin should

exist, but He foresaw its existence, and made provision to meet the terrible emergency. So great was His love for the world, that He covenanted to give His only-begotten Son, 'that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.' (John 3:16)."

Yes, the plan would be used. It was secured by love and it would be executed with no less love. Giving everything was not too much for those who He had created. He would leave heaven—He would give up His divinity and His life. He would come not as a king, but as a redeemer. He would come as a mirror of God, showing humanity the Father they had long forgotten and twisted into something they could almost grasp with their guilty hands. The plan, God's plan, called for more than could be imagined, but not more than He, in love, was willing to give.

While He waited He made a promise. Another miraculous birth was to be. He spoke among the stars at night to one called Abraham. An aged man without a son—but God's promised covenant included not only a son but generations of grandchildren after him. The promise, so unlikely, made his dear wife laugh. But the heir came and with him all the love that a parent could bestow.

It was under the starry sky one night that the same voice called to Abraham. And what he heard caused him to tremble. Surely, the God that said not to kill would not ask this

of him. And with every step toward the mountain, the same doubt was whispered in his ear. But Abraham knew the voice, and the Father that he called his, and he knew that God would provide a way. His God—our God—did just that. A ram, caught in the thicket, was provision for the required sacrifice. Abraham's son would not have to die—but One was coming would. Now, even the angels understood more of what that sacrifice would be, as again, a promised babe would be born and would die as a sacrifice for all.

Luke 2:8-14: "And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.' Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests.'"

The angels appeared to announce the birth. A sky full of radiance that only they could see. But who were these shepherds lying on the cold hills, tending to the sheep?

And why Bethlehem, a place where shepherds kept the temple flocks? Why so humble a village?

Bethlehem comes from the Hebrew “Beit Lethem” which translates to “House of Bread.” Do you catch the significance? The Bread of Life was born in the House of Bread. It wasn’t by accident that Bethlehem was chosen. It was a message of love—for all the ages. John 6:25-40 shows us that Jesus called Himself the Bread of Life. Like the manna that fed the children of Israel, God again planned to feed His children. Only this time it was with the life of the tiny babe born in this unlikely place. John 6:47-49 tells us that His bread—His life in us—will give us eternal life. It is a gift unlike any that we give at Christmas. It is eternal, as is God. It is free. All we need to do is ask. The Bread of Life, born in the House of Bread, promises us this.

The shepherds that guarded the flocks on the cold winter hills were no ordinary shepherds. And while no shepherds gained much respect from others, these were entrusted with guarding the temple sheep. Migdal Eder (flock-tower) was a watch-tower built for the protection of the sheep. It was just a ways from Bethlehem, on the hillside. From here, the shepherds could watch for robbers and wolves that meant to harm the lambs being raised for the temple sacrifice. These shepherds understood the needs of the animals. They understood the only kind of animal that would be fit to be offered for a sacrifice of sin. They

knew that the sacrifice was just a *type*, pointing forward to the time when the true sacrifice of God would be sent. And the angels, His angels, had just made that longed-for announcement. The priceless Lamb of God had been born. In Bethlehem. The Son of God—the ultimate sacrifice—the spotless lamb, born among the temple sheep. What beauty in this knowledge! What a gift on this the first Christmas.

Why a baby? Why a manger? Why Bethlehem? Why shepherds?

For love.

Pure and simple. Jesus gave up everything to come to show us the love our Father has for us. He came to reconcile us with His Father, our Father. He came to show us the true God—not the one that man had created by his rules and regulations. He came to allow the true character of God to reign in us. The Bread of Life came to the House of Bread, born among the temple lambs—to offer us eternal life. *John 1:14*: “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.”

So, this Christmas season, the Gift of all gifts has been offered to you. The Baby came, and grew, and changed lives. And on one agonizing day, He gave up His life that we may have life. The plan that was set before the world’s formation was executed with God’s precision. Isaiah 44:24: “This is what the LORD says— your

Redeemer, who formed you in the womb: I am the LORD, who has made all things, who alone stretched out the heavens, who spread out the earth by myself.”

This is the same God that choose to take on the flesh that He created and come to our earth as a baby. And that same character allows us to choose.

What gift will you give your Savior this Christmas season? ●

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Love Like A Child



memory verse

"When Jesus saw this,
he was indignant. He said
to them, "Let the little
children come to me,
and do not hinder them,
for the kingdom of God
belongs to such as these."

—Mark 10:14

He holds them close, looking into their eyes and smiling. He laughs with them, His eyes crinkling at their jokes. He is clearly enjoying Himself as much as they are.

The disciples try to stop them—the mothers who gladly hand their most precious treasures over to the outstretched arms of Jesus. They are inquisitive, their favorite word “why?” Jesus patiently answers each of their questions and waits to see the light dawn in their eyes. He looks to see their hearts open to the beauty of God’s love. And His heart expands with theirs.

They come with expectation. Not a bad quality to carry around on the edge of your heart. Expecting much, but not the big stuff the adults are filled with. They come—expecting to be loved. They see it in his smile, His touch, the gentle words He chooses. Qualities so fresh from the Father that life hasn’t yet destroyed. They are humble obedient participants, and they will never forget Him.

Looking at the disciples, the people, He wonders if they understand the importance of these little ones. Do they see how special these children are to the Father? Do they understand that their simple, honest faith is what the Father wants to see? Do we understand that God wants us to look and learn from these little ones He still sends to us with His grace?

Are You a Leader?

What qualities of a child can help our faith to be fuller?

What keeps us from being more child like?

Leader’s Lesson

A good leader knows that simple, honest, and kind leadership will set the best example.

To Be Like Jesus: He obeyed God and even died on a cross.



memory verse

"Christ was truly God. But he did not try to remain equal with God. Instead he gave up everything and became a slave, when he became like one of us. Christ was humble."

—Philippines 2:6-8, CEV

He could have grown up in a palace, but He didn't. He could have worn the most expensive clothes, but He chose not to. He could have been a student at the best schools in the country, but He wasn't.

Instead, this boy grew up in a little mountain village, first learning about God from His mother, and from looking at the beautiful things in the nature that surrounded his small village.

Everyone in the village knew this boy and loved to be around Him—He was so cheerful, kind, and helpful. And He was so intelligent! Strange, they thought, that this promising young man didn't attend school at the synagogue, where He would learn all of their important traditions!

But Jesus wasn't interested in their traditions. Instead, He was eager to learn about His Heavenly Father, and what plan He might have for His life. As soon as He could read, Jesus eagerly spent time pouring over the scripture scrolls for Himself, absorbing the stories of how God had led His people in the past, and the prophecies of the future.

He also spent time in Joseph's carpentry shop, watching carefully as His earthly father went about making and repairing things for those in the village.

Then one day when He was 12, Jesus took a trip that would change His life forever. For the first time, He

would be allowed to travel with his parents to Jerusalem, where they would attend the yearly Passover celebration, followed by the Feast of Unleavened Bread and the celebration of the first fruits of the year's harvest.

Traveling together with a large group from Nazareth, Jesus joined in the singing as they walked the many miles on their journey to Jerusalem. At last they reached the ancient city where King David himself had once sat upon the throne.

But there was no throne now—just brightly dressed soldiers all around, reminding everyone that this territory now belonged to Rome.

Eagerly, Jesus followed his parents to the temple where He would see the sacred ceremonies. As He watched the priests slay the Passover Lamb, saw the unleavened bread, watched the sheaf of first fruits being waved, young Jesus began to understand for the first time who He was, and what His life (and death) were all about.

Jesus was so absorbed in what He was seeing and learning that He did not notice when His parents left for the trip back home. Instead, He stayed in the temple, spending time with the rabbis "listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard Him were amazed at His understanding and His answers." (Luke 2:46,47, NASB).

Once Mary and Joseph found Him, Jesus gently asked, “Didn’t you know I had to be in my Father’s house?” (Luke 2:49, NIV).

Even though He now realized that He was the Son of God, 12-year-old Jesus returned to his hometown of Nazareth, where for 18 more years He was an obedient son, a loving brother, a faithful friend, and an honest citizen.

ARE YOU A LEADER?

1. What was Jesus’ childhood like?
2. Even though at the age of 12 Jesus realized He was the Son of God, why do you think He spent 18 more years living with His family in Nazareth, doing normal, everyday things?
3. In what ways, as a young person, can you be like Jesus today?

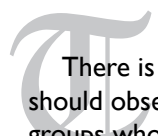
LEADER’S LESSON

A real leader follows the example of Jesus.

CHRISTMAS DAY PRECIOUS REMINDER

Insights from Ellen G. White article, Review and Herald, December 11, 1879

BY DEBBONNAIRE KOVACS

 There is a great deal of controversy in some circles over how or whether a Christian should observe Christmas. We may have youth in our Sabbath school classes and youth groups who ask these questions, and we need to prayerfully decide what our position will be. There is no doubt that many of the customs and traditions of Christmas, from the date to the tree to the giving of gifts, are actually of much earlier origin, and were kept by pagans. So the question becomes, Is it ever acceptable to God for His people to turn pagan things to godly use? To rededicate them, so to speak, to the glory of God? Is it possible? Is it wise? Will it corrupt us? What about our children?

STICKY QUESTIONS

For answers to sticky questions, we always turn first to the word of God. If there are cut-and-dried answers to this question in the Bible, I have not found them. But there are some important and thought-provoking passages. Here are two examples.

Example One

In 1 Samuel 4, 5, and 6, we have the story of the face-off between the Ark of the Covenant and the Philistine idol, Dagon. This story makes it clear that both Israelites and Philistines had an idolatrous view of the ark. It shows God teaching both Philistine and Israelite that, while He does require respect for the means He chooses to show Himself among us, He does not live in a gold-plated box, even one made to the pattern from heaven! But it also shows God working in ways that look distinctly, and surprisingly, superstitious to us today.

Example Two

In 1 Kings 3:3-5, Solomon begins his reign. Verse 3 says that he honored God’s statutes, “except that he offered sacrifices and burned incense on the high places.” In fact, Solomon went to Gibeon, “the most important of the high places,” made 1,000 sacrifices, and God

And the angel said unto them, "Fear not! For, behold, I bring you tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you: Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. —Luke 2:10-12

appeared to him there! I was shocked the first time I realized that the most famous and important prayer time recorded between God and Solomon happened at a “high place.”

These passages do not prove any particular point of view, and if some feel deeply convicted that they must not observe or celebrate Christmas, others may respect their views and refrain from argument. However, these and other passages do suggest that God will use many means that may surprise us.

LIFT HIM UP

Most people still agree that Christmas (and Easter, for that matter) offer unique opportunities to lift Jesus up, front and center. These holidays may be doors that open, perhaps only briefly, the hearts of neighbors and loved ones who don’t want to think or talk about Him any other time. This does not mean we use them as chances to preach or argue. “You say you don’t believe in Jesus—well, then, why do you like Christmas carols?” Not a good way to win friends! Instead, Christmas gives us a chance to quietly reaffirm to those we invite into our homes what really matters to us.

Ellen White was a strong proponent of this view. Enter the word “Christmas” into egwdatabase.org,

which contains a searchable database of every word she ever published, and you get 88 results. “Holidays” will turn up 71 more. In an article titled “The Holidays,” published December 11, 1879, White called the day “Christmas Day, precious reminder of the sacrifice made in man’s behalf.” She went on to say that it should never be spent in “frivolity and extravagance, gluttony and display.”

In answering those who feared that having a Christmas tree would be worldly, she responded, “You can make it like the world if you have a disposition to do so, or you can make it as unlike the world as possible.”

“Let not the parents take the position that an evergreen placed in the church for the amusement of the Sabbath school scholars is a sin, for it may be made a great blessing. Keep before their minds benevolent objects. In no case should mere amusement be the object of these gatherings. While there may be some who will turn these occasions into seasons of careless levity, and whose minds will not receive the divine impress, to other minds and characters these seasons will be highly beneficial. I am fully satisfied that innocent substitutes can be devised for many

gatherings that demoralize.”

And lest we fear that “not for mere amusement” means “don’t have any fun,” we should also note that White says Christmas celebrations should “not be dry and uninteresting, but full of innocent enjoyment that shall bear the signet of Heaven.” These quotes are from *The Adventist Home*, (pp. 482-3), much of which is taken from the above Review article.

This is in context of having a tree in the church, but the principles are just as true at home. Is our Christmas celebration “like the world,” or does it remind us of “the sacrifice made in [our] behalf”?

A SECOND LOOK

Let’s ask ourselves some questions concerning a few of the common Christmas customs and traditions:

Tree

What is the purpose of our Christmas tree? Is it to outshine the others in our neighborhood? Show off our money or interior decorating skills? Or is it a reminder of beauty, light, and warmth in the midst of (for many of us in the northern hemisphere) winter dark and cold? Is decorating a love-filled family

time, or an argument over color and placement? How much money was spent on the decorations?

Gifts

To whom do we give, and why? Is our giving a reflection of the Greatest Gift ever given? How much money do we spend? Have we considered wrapping gifts in something usable, such as pretty cloth, rather than throwaway, environmentally unsound paper and ribbon? Are we teaching our children and youth to be thrilled by giving, or by receiving? Do we know who in our churches and neighborhoods are in need of the necessities of life? Have we tried to build two-way relationships with them, received blessings from them (all year), so that they may receive from us without feeling humiliated?

Parties

Who is invited to our celebrations? Are they exercises in one-upmanship? How much do they resemble the parties Jesus described, at which sinners and outcasts were welcomed, to which the forgotten ones from the alleys and byways were invited?

Santa Clause

The tradition grows from an apparently good and godly man who gave generously to poor children, a good tradition to emulate. Is that what it's about today? Does the

modern concept of Santa Clause teach giving or receiving? Salvation by faith, or salvation by works? Truth or falsehood?

Nativity Scenes

Do we make sure that our belief of the real meaning of Christmas, even though we all know this is *not* His real birthday, has central place in our homes? When people walk in our door, what do they see first? Bright lights and bright paper, or a quiet stable scene?

ALTERNATIVE WAYS OF CELEBRATING

Some churches or other organizations put on "alternative giving bazaars" in December. A room is set up with tables, each table containing brochures and information for a different charity, such as ADRA, Bread for the World, or Heifer International. Forms are printed out so that shoppers may buy gifts in the names of their friends who don't need any more *things*, but would be delighted to know that \$30 has been given in their name to buy a goat for a poor family in Indonesia, or that \$50 will help save a girl from slavery. Our youth groups would love to organize and run such a function.

Service projects are especially important in a cold climate where many are not able to shovel their walks, keep their homes warm, or even have enough to eat, let alone

enough for a party of their own.

Some other events youth will love to have a part in are Christmas plays, programs, or skits that lift Christ up. Christmas caroling is a good way to share the Spirit, especially at the homes of shut-ins. Another fun event, unusual in many areas, is a "Posada," a Mexican tradition in which "Mary and Joseph" go from house to house seeking shelter. They are sternly turned away at earlier (well-primed) doors, but those hosts then join the procession so that it grows and grows until they reach the house where they are invited to come in and partake of a Christmas feast.

SEARCH THE HEART

Motivation is the most important factor in seeking to determine why we do what we do, and how or if we should do it differently. Something perfectly fine, godly, and pure can be made unholy by impure motives. Whether one does or does not celebrate Christmas, every instance of finger-pointing and judging of those of the other persuasion is an indulgence of an ungodly attitude. There is room for difference of opinion on this and many other matters, and it behooves us to remain humble and leave it in the hands of the One who chose to put off His strength, glory, and honor, and come to earth as a wrinkled newborn, taking a horrifying risk of failure . . . for you! For me!

Christmas blessing, indeed! ●

BUILDING SMALL GROUPS THAT LAST by Patti Emanuele

PROGRAM TARGET

The goal of this workshop is to create a friendship culture where teenagers feel an authentic sense of affirmation and belonging.

OBJECTIVE

To explore necessary steps to take in order to create an atmosphere of Christ-honoring love that is so appealing teenagers will want to come back to small group and bring their friends. This workshop will serve as a starting point and organizational model for creating and building small groups. It will take time—as with all relationships—to build cohesiveness, trust, and loyalty to one another in the group.

INTRODUCTION

Brooke entered the room hesitantly. She glanced around at the groups of kids chatting with each other and tried to catch someone's attention. She smiled hopefully at a girl who had half-turned toward her. Brooke's smile didn't stick. Brooke headed quickly for the exit door.

Mary Ellen tried to put the telephone down, but the woman kept talking.

"You've got to do something," she pleaded through the phone wire. "My daughter is so lonely at youth group," she said. Mary Ellen felt bewildered. Her youth group was filled with good kids, smart, attentive, and talkative ... with each other.

Growth concepts center upon creating a friendship culture where teenagers feel an authentic sense of affirmation and belonging. That means more than a perfunctory "Hi" to a nervous stranger. It means a warm welcome, introductions to others in the youth group. Later, as the relationships meld and develop, there should develop a trust between members. This will awaken the desire to help each other and be there during shared joys and sorrows. This is the family that God talks about. Mary Ellen had learned this truth from her youth ministry journey. But she had somehow read the manual, shared it with her youth, and then, it was completely discarded within the five minutes it took a newcomer to enter the room.

John, a long-time youth group coworker smiled and then said to her, "People have a way of becoming what you encourage them to be," he said.

Mary Ellen thought about that statement. Then she began to strategize.

EXERCISE I

"God didn't give His life on a cross so that we could minister to empty chairs," Chuck shared with the eager youth ministers before him. Chuck had served as a youth minister for more than 20 years in two churches in two states, with small numbers that grew to huge numbers. "It's not numbers but people who matter," he was often heard to say.

"We need to remember to 'go after' people," Chuck said. "In an article published by *Group Magazine* they revealed the results of their 'Cool Church' survey, which involved almost 10,000 Christian teenagers. Teens were asked to rate 10 different factors that influence their commitment to church on a sliding scale from *not at all important* to *very important*. The highest ratings in the very important

category were a welcoming atmosphere where teens could be themselves, (73 percent), and quality relationships with other teenagers, (70percent). High-tech, entertaining ministry finished dead last.

“Let’s take a look at our goal,” Chuck continued. He held up a poster that read, “Goal: Become one of the friendliest places in town.”

“Remember *Cheers* a past television show? The theme was, ‘Where everyone knows your name,’” Chuck said. “We want our kids, new and old, to feel that accepted and cared about in our youth group. Once our youth group is on the right path, we can form small groups,” he added.

Chuck held up another poster: “Did you kiss a frog today?” the poster asked.


“Let me explain,” Chuck began. “Sometimes newcomers show up at meeting looking froggy with warts of apathy, cynicism, and rebellion that many times turn away even the most seasoned youth leaders. We must look past the warts and see Christ in them. Offer the kiss of encouragement. Choose to believe in our youth just as Jesus did with Simon who was renamed “Peter, the Rock.”

 **Discuss exercise 1**

WHY SMALL GROUP?

- Help the youth to grow deeper in their personal relationship with God.
- In the small group, every member is important, while in the church at large this individual can oftentimes go unnoticed.
- Develop a closer relationship that can lead to a lifetime friendship.
- Keep members together and connected to the church.
- Members are more involved in its activity.
- Social and spiritual growth
- Easy to form Bible study as well as a Spirit of Prophecy study groups.
- Can be used as a way to disciple newly baptized members.

EXERCISE 2


 Ahead of time ask a few perceptive students to create scenarios depicting experiencing your youth service through the eyes of a newcomer.

S H O R T B R E A K

 **Distribute exercise 2 handouts**

“Okay, we haven’t set up the small group yet, but that’s coming,” Chuck said. “It’s important to cultivate the right attitude in all of us before we actually set up a group. After all, this is not about building a business, it is about building relationships,” he reminded the group.

 **Discuss exercise 2**

 Before breaking for lunch get your characters together for the exercise 3 skit that’s coming up.

L U N C H B R E A K

EXERCISE 3 (drama)

Let’s review.


- We have learned how to create the right atmosphere for our youth.
- We have taken an honest look at ourselves and our attitudes and learned how Jesus evaluates and loves each of us.
- Now it is time to organize a plan for setting up our small groups.

 Perform skit on page 18

Discuss the skit.

Remind the group that the skit is showing what the power of a youth group filled with Jesus Christ’s love can do.

Next, take a look at how to build a small group from our youth ministry.

 Distribute *Step by Step Plan for Building a Small Group* and the *Small Group Game Plan for the Youth Leader* handouts.

After you have distributed the handouts, discuss it.

DIVE IN

Play the song they used in the human video. Mention that we all want to count for something and that's what this small group is going to be about.

WORKSHOP EVALUATION

- Pass out the photocopies and pens or pencils and explain that you'd like students to write their honest answers to the questions. Let them know that it is anonymous and that the answers will be read aloud at the end.
- Give 5 minutes to write, then collect sheets and mix them up.
- Read the answers aloud.

DISCUSS EVALUATION

Express appreciation for everyone's honesty.
Let them know date of next meeting.

WRAP THINGS UP...

- Ask students to pray for God to make the small group special.
- After the prayer, pass out the "Live a Legacy" bookmarks to the students as reminders of the night's discussion.
- Encourage everyone to hang out and play some up-tempo songs on the CD player.
- Walk around and mingle with the kids.

LASTLY... BE HAPPY, RELAX

Go ahead relax, at least for the next minute or two. After the meeting is over, the kids are pumped, and you have collapsed in exhaustion in your easy chair, start working on keeping those kids pumped. When you see the fruit of your labors you will be motivated to continue the effort.

End the meeting with prayer.

e n d o f w o r k s h o p



MATERIAL TO PREPARE AHEAD OF TIME:

Exercise 1

 Prepare two large poster with the words

Poster 1. **GOAL: Become one of the friendliest places in town.**

Poster 2. **Did you kiss a frog today?**

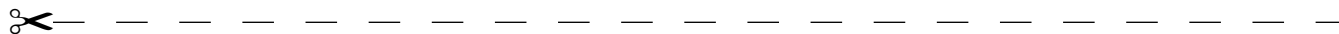
Exercise 2 handout

1. What impact did Jesus' love and kindness have on the lives of people like Peter (Matt. 16:13-19 and Acts 2:14-41), or Paul, (Acts 8:1, 9:1-31), Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10), the Samaritan woman (John 4:1-42), Thomas (John 20:24-31), and the thief on the cross (Luke 23:36-43)? *Discuss.*
2. Remember that feeling of awkwardness and insecurity as an adolescent? Try to remember those feelings when you meet a similar youth. *Discuss.*
3. **Have the students you had asked earlier (see Preparing for Exercise 2, above) to give their report. *Discuss the scenarios.*
4. Reflect on at least one person who saw beyond your warts and helped you to become who you are today. What did they do to give you the "kiss of encouragement?" *Discuss.*
5. Make a list of youth you helped to grow into their potential as a result of your authentic friendliness and belief in them. *Discuss.*
6. Make a list of youth who still need help to reach their potential. *Discuss.*
7. Rate yourself on how well you are doing in the area of intentional friendship and warmth. *Discuss why you give yourself the rating.*

MATERIAL TO PREPARE AHEAD OF TIME:

Exercise 3: Step by Step Plan for Building a Small Group

1. Find a model as part of youth ministry every 4 to 6 weeks.
2. Make sure that it doesn't take another night of the week away from your leaders or students. It doesn't require a high level of follow-up to ensure people will be present. Leaders are able to run their small groups with less difficulty because you are helping plan the meetings and you launch the first part of the youth night for them.
3. Groups are hosted as part of the regular youth meeting.
4. Groups are assigned different areas of your meeting space in which they regularly meet together.
5. Plan to communicate with leaders what they will be doing with students while in the small-group meetings. Remember to thank them for being willing to invest in the youth ministry.
6. Create a list of regulars
7. Draw up a list of prospects.
8. Begin to add and divide and mix up people.
9. Recruit and place adult leaders.
10. Double check group assignments and request feedback from adult leaders.
11. Establish a launch date.
12. Host a small-group leaders meeting.
13. Create an awesome kickoff. Advertise at church, plan a celebration party the week before, etc. The idea is to advertise, advertise, advertise and make sure it sounds fun to young people.
14. Make sure to be available for the leaders. Answer your phone at weird hours, meet for donuts or stay later at a church get-together. Motivate and care for your leaders, and they will stay interested. Just as with the youth, they must feel an ownership toward the planning and outcome for these young people. Remind them that they are helping to guide kids on their Christian walk to be more like Jesus Christ.



SMALL GROUP GAME PLAN FOR THE YOUTH GROUP LEADER (sample)

Recruit several students to create a “human video” to the song “Legacy.” As the song plays, they should pantomime (dramatize) scenarios in which teenagers reach out to other students, inviting them to join their small groups and then create new “legacies” through these Christ-honoring relationships.

Supplies

Make sure each small group leader has a CD player, a CD of Christian music, the “Woven and Spun” CD, bookmarks with the words, “Live a Legacy” printed on them (one per student), photocopies of the “My Legacy” page, pens or pencils, and snacks for the students.

Meeting Outline (sample)

Begin your meeting with the entire youth group gathered together. Start out with praise and worship time, then take a few minutes to explain why you're launching a small group program. Tell kids how it will work, and encourage them to view it as an opportunity to grow closer to each other and to Jesus. Challenge students to consider how they can use small groups to make an impact on others' lives. Use Scripture to teach about the importance of living a legacy of Christian love.

Have the human video team perform their "Legacy" pantomime.

Dismiss small groups to their meeting areas, and let the small group leaders take over from there.

Reminders for the small group leader.

- Always know your meeting place
- Arrive early
- Make your meeting room inviting.
- Check your supplies.
- Be friendly!

When your small group concludes, take time to hang out with the students. Ask for help to clean up your meeting area.

Supplies

Be sure to gather these supplies ahead of time.

You'll need:

CD player

CD of Christian music

Woven and Spun CD

Bookmarks with "Live a Legacy" printed on them

Photocopies of the "My Legacy" page (one per student)

Pens or pencils

Snacks to share with your group.

To Begin

Introduce yourself.

Have youth hand out snacks.



EXERCISE 3 SKIT

Setting: A youth group meeting.

Characters: A girl from China named Linn who came to the United States as an exchange student, Beth, a Christian girl whom she met at school, a youth director, and a narrator.

Linn: It has been fun doing things together the last few weeks.

Beth: Yes. I would like to invite you to my church youth group where you will meet other Christian students. Would that be alright?

Linn (excitedly): Oh, yes, I would enjoy that.

That week Linn and Beth arrive at a youth group meeting.

Linn: Everyone is so kind and friendly.

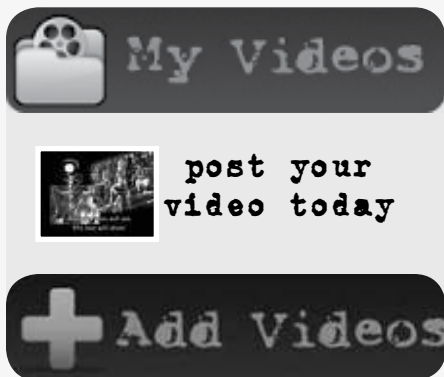
Narrator: Time passes. Linn is invited to people's houses, youth group activities, meals, etc. She watches skits about Jesus, and listens to Bible Studies.

(Return to meeting setting) **Linn:** I think I would like to ask Jesus Christ into my heart.

Youth group director: "That's wonderful Linn! What led you to this decision?"

Linn: My Christian friends have used this year to build a bridge from their hearts to mine. Today I let Jesus walk over it.

end of skit



VISIT

<http://www.gcyyouthministries.org>



IDEAPAC

TOOLBOX

**READY-TO-USE
RESOURCES**

SKITS AND I-PAGE PROGRAM PLANNERS

- 20** Delegating, It's an Art Form
by Kimberley Tagert-Paul
- 22** Picture Perfect (delegating)
by Kimberley Tagert-Paul
- 23** Did I Hear that Right? (Spiritual gifts)
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by Patti Emanuele

DELEGATING, IT'S AN ART FORM by Kimberley Tagert-Paul

PROGRAM TARGET: To help youth understand that delegating can help everyone to have greater success and more effective time management.

SCRIPTURES: Ephesian 5:15-16, Exodus 18:7-27 (This is about Moses learning to delegate his time; it is one of the best on this topic.) Ecclesiastes 3:1-8.

TO PREPARE: Divide the group into two smaller groups by assigning numbers, or having them pick a colored number out of a hat. Have two rooms set up for each of the two groups to work in. Make sure you have a timer of some sort to notify the groups when their time is up. Have plenty of paper and pens/pencils in each room for the groups to write on and take notes. Have a chalkboard/poster board available for each groups' use. Post the guidelines for each group on the door, and have an adult helper in each room to make sure they stick to the guidelines, but let the youth do their best with the guidelines they are given with little intervention.

INTRODUCTION

Today, we are going to learn some of the Bible principles about delegating. God calls many people to do many tasks. And He equips us with the talents to do those things He has planned for us. One of the quickest ways to experience burn out, or ill health, or inability to finish a task is to try to do it all by yourself. We aren't talking about things like homework, or making a meal. We are talking about major projects—things that are definitely better worked on as a group. You will experience this more when you are working in your chosen career.

TO DO

We are going to work on a project today within your assigned group. You will have 20–30 minutes to try to complete the plan for the task as best

you can. (Schedule the time according to the size of your group and the amount of time you have available in your program. You will need at least 10 minutes for the follow-up and closing.) You will be given guidelines in each group. Do what you can *within these guidelines*. Then you will rotate to another room where you will again be given another assignment. Use only the guidelines for that group to complete the task. Then we will meet back here for further discussion.

GROUP ONE: *Planning a float for the community parade*

Here's your task: Your community is having a parade to promote the Christmas holiday. Your youth leader has signed your group up to make a float that represents your church. The theme of the parade is "Holiday Magic."

So what are you waiting for? Get going!

(Need some guidelines? You could . . . have the group leader do everything. Or let each person decide what they want to do. Or have the group leader assign tasks randomly. Or pick names at random and assign tasks. You pick the style and just get planning!

GROUP TWO: *Planning a program for the Seniors of your church.*

Here's your task: The pastor of your church has asked that the youth group be in charge of planning and doing a program for the seniors in your church. It can be an entertainment program, a dinner, or both. You must make the written plan for this program. To do this, first pick a leader. Then, make a list of the

goals that you want to accomplish with this program. See the big picture before you break it down into smaller pictures. Communicate well within the group. Now, break the list down into specific goals. Help the leader figure out the best way to delegate the assignments to people (at random, learn their likes and dislikes, learn their talents and assign according to this knowledge, let people pick what interests them the most). Figure out the way you are going to use to track progress. The leader then should let go and let the people assigned their task write out the strategies they are going to use to accomplish the task.

TO DO

(Gather the group back together. Prepare for some frustrated youth and lots of discussion) You had two different assignments, but they both were basically the same. You had to work within a group to accomplish something. Which group did you work best in? Why? Was it easier to delegate responsibilities from the beginning, or to just find your way through somehow? In which group where you able to get more accomplished? Why? In which group did you as an individual feel more of value to?

CONCLUSION

Delegating is an art form. It isn't something that is natural to all people, some find it easier than others. Jesus practiced delegation. The first step He took was to call people He

knew were capable. Were they rough around the edges? You bet! James and John were called the "Sons of Thunder;" Peter was a fisherman with a penchant for violence as a means to an end (Remember he cut off the ear of the servant in Gethsemane?). But Jesus saw through their outward character, and knew that inside, with the right training, they would be able to take God's message to the world.

The second step Jesus took was to train them. He did this everyday by directly talking with them, demonstrating His principles with His own life, and letting them work beside Him. Then, He sent them out by teams to work and try their knowledge. They came back with a taste of success and wanted to serve Him more. Then He began training them in earnest. And after He left and went back to Heaven, He gave them the Holy Spirit, and with power they were able to conquer the world.

Delegating is often about control. It is a hard thing for many Christians to do. They don't like giving up control —whether in their jobs or their lives. Coming to Christ is about giving up control. We can trust Him completely with our lives. When we do that, He can and will make us effective in His ministry and our lives. Letting go is often the hardest part of delegating. But if and when we learn that lesson, we will start to become all the God has planned for us—and that plan is out of this world!

Close with prayer. ●

CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP, PRAYING LEADERSHIP

"The path of men who are placed as leaders is not an easy one. But they are to see in every difficulty a call to prayer. Never are they to fail of consulting the great Source of all wisdom. Strengthened and enlightened by the Master Worker, they will be enabled to stand firm against unholy influences and to discern right from wrong, good from evil. They will approve that which God approves, and will strive earnestly against the introduction of wrong principles into His cause.

—Christian Leadership, p. 4

► FOCUS: **Delegating**

PICTURE PERFECT?

by Kimberley Tagert-Paul

PROGRAM TARGET

To help see that giving up control isn't such a bad thing.

SCRIPTURE

Exodus 18:17,18

CENTRAL BIBLE TRUTH

God is a God of order. He wants us to use our time and talents effectively.

CHARACTERS

Mary, the new yearbook leader who doesn't yet know how to delegate; Linda, a friend who is lots of fun; Tim, a very good photographer; and Erin, a friend who does scrap booking.

SETTING

A school hallway. If possible, have a locker at which the friends can gather around. Some school books for them to carry will also help set the stage.

The characters are already on the stage—Mary is off to the left and has a paper in her hand. She has just read it and is excited about what it says. The others are gathered around Tim's locker talking quietly.)

Mary: Wow! I get to be yearbook editor. I've always wanted this job! Yeah! O.K., the first things I have to do is ... there are so many things! Where do I start.? I suppose I better have some staff. That might help. But of course, I will be making all the major decisions. That's my job, right? O.K. There's Tim and Erin. They are both good helpers. Tim takes great pictures. Erin's good at layout because she does scrap booking. Oh, there's Linda. She's fun to work with. I'll ask her, too.

(Mary moves over to where the group is gathered around Tim's locker.)

Mary: Hi!

Linda: Hey, congratulations. We heard you were selected to be the yearbook editor. That's a big job. Want some help?

Mary: That's why I came over. I know you are good at pictures, Tim. Want to be the official photographer?

Tim: Sure, why not.? I've

got the extra time. I could take some photos everyday and see what we come up with. I've already got a great shot of Danny goofing around by his locker that would be funny.

Erin: I've seen that one—it is funny! I know just how we could lay it out ...

Mary: Um, yeah, that would be great. But I haven't yet decided about the categories and everything.

Erin: Well, if you want, I can help with that. I'm good at scrap booking.

Mary: Yeah, yeah. I want you all to help if you will.

Linda: Sign me up. I did it last year. It was fun. You know ... we had some ideas we didn't get to use ... maybe they would work this year.

Mary: Well, I have to get my plans together first. Then we can meet. I'll get back to you when I have it all figured out. Thanks for wanting to help. I know it will be the best yearbook ever. *(She seems pleased with herself and smiles.)*

I'll be getting back to you all soon with your assignments. I just have to get it together first. See you later. *(She walks off with her head held a little too high.)*

Erin: I don't know about you, but, maybe we have signed up for something ...

Tim: ... that isn't going to be a lot of fun?

Erin: Yeah, that's what I was thinking.

Linda: Isn't this suppose to be a group effort? Not a **MARY** effort.

Tim: Think she'll get it before it's too late?

Erin: She'll have to. Or she'll die trying ...

Linda: A good leader knows when to lead—and when to delegate.

Tim: *(shrugging his shoulders)* Well, I hope she gets it. If not, I can take some good pictures of her falling apart when things aren't getting done. We can call it ...

Erin: Mary's not Merry?

Linda: Funny you two. How about we help her see that delegating might make for a better project.

Tim: Maybe you should be the leader, Linda.

Linda: No thanks. Let's just work together to do the best we can. Mary will catch on. The teachers must have thought so or they wouldn't have put her in charge. Right? *(The group nods their agreement with this and walk off together.)*

► FOCUS: **Spiritual Gifts**

DID I HEAR THAT RIGHT?

by Kimberley Tagert-Paul

CENTRAL BIBLE TRUTH

Spiritual gifts are just that, gifts from God to help us glorify Him.

SCRIPTURE

Proverbs 3:5,6

TEACHING AIM

Learn to identify your special gift/s and use them as God would have you to do.

CHARACTERS

Samantha, picked to be the VBS leader; Ben, skilled at being a leader; Katie, can't sing but can bake; Jay- can't sing, can't bake, but builds amazing things.

SETTING AND PROPS

A table and four chairs, a notebook that Katie is reading from, and a hat sitting on the table with slips of paper in it.

(The group of youth are gathered around a table, sitting in chairs facing the audience. Make sure no one has their back to the audience. Samantha is standing at the head of the table trying to get everyone to be quiet. They continue talking amongst themselves.)

Samantha: O.K. Um ... listen up everyone ... Um ... Please be quiet.

Ben: Here, let me help you. *(whistles loudly)* Everyone, pay attention, Sam is trying to get us going.

(All of the youth stop talking and look at Ben, not Samantha)

Samantha: Um ... Thanks everyone. We need to get started. We have been asked by the church to help with the VBS program this year. So we need to assign everyone a job. Katie, you can help with ... um ... the music.

Katie: Music? I can't sing. Everyone knows that.

Jay: That's for sure. Why is Katie doing the music?

Ben: Just be quiet and see what Samantha is doing. They put her in charge.

Samantha: Ben. You can do the sets for the stories. They need you to build three different scenes.

Ben: Build something. Uh ... O.K., I guess I can try.

Jay: I can help you, Ben. That's what I like to do the best.

Samantha: No, Jay. I need you to be in charge in the kitchen. Pass out snacks and help bake the cookies and things.

Jay: Are you kidding? Sam, I don't bake cookies. That's for people like Katie.

Samantha: No, Katie is doing the music. Remember?

Katie: I told you I can't sing. Are you listening? *(She tries to sing "This Little Light of Mine," but sings it very badly.)* See, I can't sing.

Ben: Why do you want Katie to be in charge of music; and why not put Jay on the sets? I don't get it, Samantha. We're willing to help, but ...

Katie: Yeah, I want to help, but, I can't do the music.

Samantha: O.K., O.K. I hear you. So you'll be in charge of the sets and Jay can do the music.

Jay: Ha! Do you want to hear me sing? *(He stands up like he is preparing to sing.)*

Ben: Wait a minute, Jay. We've all heard you sing. *(Everyone except Samantha giggles.)*

Katie: Yeah. Jay sings about as good as I do. And that's not very good.

Samantha: Will you just do what I assigned you? Please. *(She is beginning to get upset and sits down in frustration.)*

Ben: We all want to help, Samantha. We really do. It's just that you are asking us to do things that we aren't good at. *(Ben puts his hand on her shoulder.)*

Samantha: Well, I'm not good at leading. I know that. But they asked me, so what was I to say?

Ben: Do you mind if I help you? *(Samantha nods her agreement.)* I can be the leader, Katie can do the baking, Jay is good at making things, and you, Samantha, should be in crafts. That's your area, right?

Samantha: Oh, that is so much better! I never thought of giving assignments based on what you were good at.

Jay: Then how did you decide?

Samantha: Well, I, um ... I just pulled names out of a hat. *(She holds up the hat and pulls out a slip, then she looks down and everyone giggles.)* I'm glad Ben had a better idea.

Ben: Well, it wasn't actually me. God gave us all our gifts. We just need to use them for Him. The right way.

Katie: Yeah, the right way. Can you imagine Jay and I doing a duet?

(They stand next to each other and try "This Little Light of Mine" but make a mess of it as the lights go out.)

► **FOCUS: Leadership**

MENTORING

by Kimberley Tagert-Paul

PROGRAM TARGET

To begin a discussion that will allow youth to explore an area not often talked about: the need to be mentored as well as the need to be a mentor. Discussion will help them explore the possibilities of choosing a mentor that will guide them in the right ways, and will help them in learning how they can in turn use their talents and gifts to be a blessing as a mentor, especially to younger youth.

SCRIPTURES

Jeremiah 29:11, Jeremiah 33:3, and Proverbs 18:16

YOU NEED

- Poster or board to write
- Pens/markers/chalk

INTRODUCTION

There is a treasure hidden somewhere in our city. Your job today is to go out and find it. O.K. Go. Good luck.

What are you waiting for? Shouldn't you get up right now and go out and get it? Is there something you need? What might help you in your search? A map? A compass? A plan? Can't you go out and quickly find it without those things? How long do you think it would take you? Oh, do you also need to know what you are searching for?

Can you imagine having to search the whole city for something while not knowing how to narrow your search or even what you are looking for? It would be impossible to do, wouldn't it? Some of you may feel that your life is just like that now—in-between childhood and adulthood, not really understanding where you have come from or where you are going. But, there is help. That's what today's program is about—mentoring.

TO DO

First, let's define Christian mentoring. Any

one have an idea of what we are talking about? (Allow time for discussion, writing down the definitions as given.)

Let them summarize what they think Christian mentoring is. So let's sum up what we think Christian mentoring is. (A one-on-one relational experience in which one person empowers another person by giving of their time and talents as resources given by God.)

Now we know what a mentor is. DO you think it is easier to be *mentored* or to be a *mentor*? Do you think most people want someone to help them, but on the other hand, how many are willing to take the time to help? You'll discover that it is important to find a good mentor in your life—but it's also important to reach out with your knowledge and talents to mentor someone else.

There are things you will gain as a mentor and a mentoree. Can we make a list of these? (Allow time for discussion—have the two sections ready to write on your board or poster.) A mentor gains ... (wisdom, the chance

to disciple, networking, accountability). A mentored gains ... (wisdom, someone to believe in them, accountability, networking, someone to help push you). These are suggestions—the group will probably have more ideas.

WHAT TO DO

Divide the group into teams of 2 to 4. Give them paper and pen and instructions to:

- Write a list of things that they are confident enough in that they could mentor someone else.
- Write a list of areas that they would like a mentor's help with.
- People they can think of who might help them in finding the guidance they seek.
- After discussion within the group, share ways that others see them confident in and able to mentor

Next, ask them this question: If you just plow through life without a plan or direction, but keep steady to the plow, you'll probably get somewhere, but will it be where God

wants you to go? (Allow for discussion within the group. This should help them discuss that just getting through doesn't have to be their plan—they can become more and daring to reach out to a mentor can help them become not only productive but all that God has planned for them.)

DEBRIEF

Allow about 20 or more minutes for discussion within the small groups.

Gather the groups together.

Finding a mentor and being a mentor can add dimensions to your life that will help you to become all that God has planned for you to be. Why settle for mediocre when God created you to be fantastic? Everyone needs at least three things: a dream, someone to believe in them, and the determination to get to the victory line.

There are things you can do to make this relationship a success. First, start with prayer, both to find the right person to help you, and pray together when that

relationship forms. Second, ask questions, both of you. It is the duty of the mentor to lead and guide, not to give all the answers. Mentorees need to ask questions as well.

In looking for a mentor, look at their track record. Success speaks for itself. Allow your mentor/mentored relationship to develop naturally. Forcing it to try to achieve a goal seldom works.

Don't overwhelm each other—observation is often the best way to learn. Ask question, think things through, but don't expect all the right answers to be forthcoming. It takes time to reach goals and desires. Let God lead you and you'll find that being a mentor and being mentored is one of the most rewarding experiences you can have.

PREP TIME

Have a board to write on or two poster boards to write on—one for the definition, the other for ideas on mentors/mentorees. Be prepared to divide the group into smaller groups (preferably try to mix them up so that they are not with their closest friends). Have paper and pens available for each member of the group. Encourage them to take the papers home and look at them. It should encourage them to see what others see as their strengths.



► **FOCUS: Developing
God's Character**

SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT OF YOUTH

by Patti Emanuele

CENTRAL BIBLE TRUTH:

God has entrusted us with the responsibility of implanting God's truths in the lives of our youth.

BIBLE PASSAGE:

Ephesians 6:4: "Fathers, do not exasperate your children, instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord."

TEACHING AIM:

To recognize every opportunity to teach youth God's ways. To be conscious of the example we set before them.

CHARACTERS: Cara, Joyce, Dan, Evan, Jim, and Rob. Rob is a student at the High School. The others are youth group leaders.

SETTING AND PROPS:

A large hardware and paint store.

At a large hardware and paint store, friends meet.

Cara: Hey, Jim, who've you got with you tonight?

Jim: This is my friend, Rob. He's a senior in my youth group at our church.

Joyce, Dan, and Evan: Hi Rob.

Dan: So, Rob, why in the world would you decide to hang out with this guy?

Jim: Thanks, Dan.

Rob: He's cool. We're going to paint the youth group activity room so we thought we'd run out and get more paint. Do you know this guy agreed with me that black would be a cool color?

Jim: Hey, it was your idea.

Joyce: You're kidding right, Jim?

Jim: Rob always has great ideas for what the kids should do. I listen to him now. He tells me that the kids would like a black wall. I'm old, what do I know?

Evan laughs.

Evan: You've been working with the youth group for awhile now, Jim. How's it going?

Jim: They're awful. (Jim winks.) I don't know how I've stood with it. I've had to go on camping trips, roller coaster rides, and endure marathon game nights. I've been forced to eat tons of pizza, and laughed at jokes so hard my ribs hurt. It's been rough.

Jim: I'm just going to go look for that paint. I'll see you guys later.

Rob: I'll be right there.

Rob leans forward toward Evan, Joyce and Dan.

Rob: If you want to know the truth, meeting Jim was the best thing that happened to me. He's been kind of a big brother. We do fun stuff yeah, but he also teaches us Bible studies, and how to live right for God. He's been a great influence on plenty of kids, including myself. I consider myself really blessed to have met him. When I go to college next year I'm going to still try and keep contact with him. He's been a great friend.

Rob leaves to join Jim.

Joyce: That is so nice to hear. Sometimes I forget that we have a responsibility to teach and mentor our youth. It's easy to get caught up in all the fun activities.

Evan: You're right. Our first job is to teach them by our words and actions about God and how He expects us to act in the world.

Dan: This has been a great day. Who knew going to a hardware store would be so educational.

Joyce: You bet. I feel great.

The three friends continue down the aisles, each satisfied that they had already found what they needed.

Gr a c e

LEADERS NOTES:

This is a perfect chance to lead your young people to the Savior. Pray over this study before giving it. Pray for your young people's hearts!

Ice Breaker: *Expensive Gifts and Givers*

Close your eyes and think. It's hot outside. You want a refreshing way to cool down. What pops into your mind? A quick swim or a cool shower? Air conditioning? How about an old standard used throughout the world. Ice-cream. We all may scream for ice cream at one time or another. But it's a sure bet that not many will scream for the most expensive sundae on the planet. Its sold in New York City at the whopping price tag of \$1,000! It is appropriately named "The Grand Opulence Sundae." Its famous garnish is made from 23K edible gold. Yes, edible gold. Most people assume only the rich and famous eat these on rare occasions, but the company admits that they sell at least one of these a month. Puts a whole new spin on sweet treats, huh? So maybe your second choice will be something equally refreshing. With your eyes closed again, can you picture a sweet, mouth watering, juicy, ruby red watermelon? Sounds good, huh?

The American version is even grown in a seedless form. No more old fashioned seed spitting contests! There is nothing like an ice cold melon on a hot summer day. Out of season, the price tag on these juicy orbs can be expensive. But on the northern island of Hokkaido, Japan, they grow one of the rarest types of watermelon in the world. It is called the Densuke watermelon, and is prized because it is sweeter and firmer than the American variety. The Japanese people purchase these as gifts because they are that good. They are so rare; often only 60 are produced in a season. The most expensive of these fruits sold at auction for \$6,100. Care for a slice?

So the question is, who can afford these luxuries? Perhaps people like the late Susan Buffet, wife of Warren Buffet who left \$2.5 billion to the foundation they started. This was one of the largest donations ever on record. Then there is Bill and Melinda Gates—the founders of Microsoft—who have given \$3 billion.

Dig-In: So what do the wealthy do with all their money? Buy ice cream and watermelons? Give it to charity? In the United States, the rich own 41 percent of the nation's wealth. Yet they donate only 2% of their incomes yearly to charity. Being wealthy doesn't mean they've necessarily learned to share the wealth.

But the greatest gift has been given. And it is free! It came at the highest price too—the death of God's Son. It's name? Grace.

Hot Potato: *The Greatest Gift*

God's gift of grace allows us to find salvation. Read Ephesians 2:8-9 and Romans 11:6. Salvation is God's gift. No one can earn it or pay for it. It is far better than the most expensive things in the world. But it remains a gift.

With this gift you can have eternal life. How? Grace allows you to believe that God loves you and wants a personal relationship with you. Looking at His life it is easy to see that we are all sinners. Admitting that allows His grace to begin working in our lives. But the best part is that knowing Jesus died for us on the cross, and that we can be sure that He will forgive our sins and give us eternal life. Just ask Jesus into your heart and pray for Him to become your Savior. If you do this, then you've accepted His gift of grace. Grace is a gift that feels wonderful.

Hot Potato Question:

What do you think holds most people back from accepting God's grace? If it is free, how come it seems so hard to accept? Is God's grace really free, or do you have to do something after you accept it? Do you think there are strings attached? Does man like to add conditions to God's grace? What do you think God thinks about this? Are there some things that are tradition and not part of God's way? What do you think some of these are? What can you do about it? Have you accepted Jesus as your personal Savior? Why or why not? *(leaders, this is a great time to really talk about this and give your youth a chance to commit their lives to Jesus. Remember to do it with grace.)* (continued on page 30)



2010

Starter Kit

&

Discussion Questions

now available

online at

www.gcyouthministries.org

listen1T: music info



Chris Rice - Peace Like A River

Released October 2, 2007

“As a kid sitting on a pew week after week, I had no idea how important these great hymns would be to my faith. I miss the days when our songs were written to teach and preserve theology rather than to become a radio hit. From great theologians come the songs sung to strengthen and remind each other of the peace and freedom to come. I hope these hymns will remind you of the great truths they contain.” – **Chris Rice**

Available at <http://www.adventistbookcenter.com>



Peace On Earth is now available in stores and online! With 2008's *Peace On Earth*, Casting Crowns joins many of its Christian-rock peers in the "We-finally-made-a-holiday-album club." In contrast to its regular studio offerings, the Florida-based band generally avoids its guitar-heavy post-grunge sound, instead employing a string section to stirring affect (see the sweepingly orchestral "I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day"). Available at <http://www.adventistbookcenter.com>



The Classic Christmas Album is THE Christmas CD for the holidays. It has all the beautiful Christmas songs you want. Kiri Te Kanawa's version of Schubert's Ave Maria will bring tears to your eyes, Gabriel Faure's performance of Pie Jesu from Requiem is simply beautiful, and the English Concert Choir's performance of Handel's Hallelujah from Messiah will take your breath away. This is a great buy and will be treasured all year long.

Available at <http://www.adventistbookcenter.com>



ACCENT: resource for Adventist Youth Leaders

(continued from page 28)

Apply It/Bible Text Discovery:

John 3:16 This is a wonderful place to begin the discussion about grace. Why does this verse tell us that God gave His Son? Does grace have something to do with love? What kind of love would give up an only Son? Love is a core principle of God's character. Do you think that God's love is big enough to include you, no matter where you are or what you have done? Do you have to accept a gift in order to receive it?

Hebrews 11:4 What did Cain bring as an offering? Was this a thank offering or a sacrificial offering? Did Cain's offering point forward to a Savior? Why was Abel's sacrifice accepted by God? How did Abel come to God? Do we need to come to Christ—like Abel—and acknowledge our need of a Savior?

Romans 10:8-9 Why do you think the Bible tells us that we have to confess our faith? What makes saying it out loud more real? Is it hard to admit to your friends that Jesus is your Savior? Why or why not? Do you remember the old song that tells you not to hide your light under a bushel? If you have a light, don't you want it to shine? Witnessing to others helps us to grow. Can that growth hurt at times? Is God big enough to get us through the rough times?

2 Cor. 5:17-21 How can God make you into a new creature? Do you think the Holy Spirit helps to do this? When you acknowledge Jesus, does He help you think differently? What does it mean to be reconciled? Does sin take you away from God? Why do you think God wants us to be reconciled with Him? Is it out of love? How can you be an ambassador for Christ? What does an ambassador do? Does being an ambassador for Christ mean that He will work in every aspect of your life?

James 1:27 Are religion and faith the same thing? Why or why not? Can someone do something good (works) for the wrong reason? Can the same "works" be done by two different people—one good and the other, not? If you love God, will you do things that fit with His character? Will you do these things out of love or out of duty? Does man ever make rules for doing things that displeases God? Why or why not. Is God's simple definition of pure religion easy to follow for young people today? Why do you think that way?

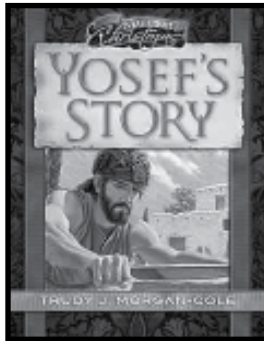
Extra Gem: Read what Ellen White writes about the wonders of God's grace. "We should never have learned the meaning of this word "grace" had we not fallen. God loves the sinless angels, who do His service and are obedient to all His commands, but He does not give them grace. These heavenly

beings know nought of grace; they have never needed it, for they have never sinned. Grace is an attribute of God shown to undeserving human beings. We ourselves did not seek after it, but it was sent out in search of us. God rejoices to bestow this grace upon all who hunger for it, not because we are worthy, but because we are so utterly unworthy. Our need is the qualification which gives us the assurance that we shall receive this gift." (HP 34.3)

Sharing Time: Do you have a better understanding of God's gift of to you. Why keep it to yourself? Think of one of your friends that needs to hear the truth and freedom that come by God's grace. Pray for that person. Then go to them and share the story of the greatest gift. Invite them to share in it with you. There is nothing like sharing a gift to make it even more special!

This Week's Challenge: Write down the top ten things you need God to forgive you for. Next, pray about each one of these items. Ask God for forgiveness. Now, here comes the hard part—give these things to God. He will forgive you completely. To remind you of this, tear a piece of paper into tiny pieces and throw it away. It is gone before you know it. Now think of God's free grace. Now smile and know that you are free! ●

readIT: book info

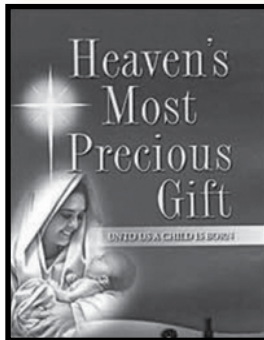


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Trudy Morgan-Cole

An angel, an unbelievable tale, and an impossible situation that changed his life forever. *Yosef's Story* is the first installment in a new holiday series entitled “*That First Christmas*.”

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