

 AMERICAN BIBLE SOCIETY

RECORD

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2004

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REALLY Want
For Christmas?**

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ENCOURAGE
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COMFORT FOR OUR TROOPS IN

IRAQ

Unraveling the Puzzle of Christmas

"If you obey my teaching . . . you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." John 8:31b, 32 (GNT)

Isaiah wrote that, through Jesus we, ". . . will see and understand something [we] had never known." (52:15b) What do we learn from Christmas that we couldn't have known without the incarnation? For one, Jesus demonstrated what "freedom in Christ" should look like.

In his running debate with the religious leaders of his day, Jesus bumped up against their "must do" or legalistic understanding of obedience; what must they do or not do to either win God's favor or avoid God's judgment.

Jesus (and Paul) taught that only Jesus could provide a sufficient obedience. Philippians 2:6 says that, "Jesus was truly God. But he did not try to remain equal with God." Only Jesus, even though he was one with God, always put the wishes of God the Father first.

Only by standing in the shadow of Christ's total obedience, where our conflicted deeds are no longer visible, can we be safe from judgment. It is not our deeds, but Christ's deeds that can withstand the penetrating light of God's glory.

But why, then, does Jesus promise that if we "obey" his teaching, we will be "set free." Herein lies the conundrum: only choices that come from the inside — that come from the heart — are free. It is only in our Spirit-given attitude — our desire to please, not just to obey — that we experience freedom. Our aim to please turns the obligation of obedience into a powerful motivation. Our pleasure comes by pleasing God. And like good children, we will sometimes make mistakes in learning how to best please our heavenly Father.

"Freedom in Christ" says we no longer need be caught up in avoiding punishment; Jesus has dealt with that by coming through on our behalf. We are now free to find those ways in which we can bring God pleasure and, like children, please our Father as we mature in our relationship with him, as we meditate on God's Word. Our focus shifts from ourselves to God and others. That is the miracle of Christmas, that Jesus shifted the focus from sacrifice and the payment of debts to a life of thanksgiving — from legalism to freedom.

The Bible's message of forgiveness begins in Genesis and runs throughout its pages. It is the story of Christmas; it is the gift of Christ's obedience — a gift that makes our obedience possible. And we send a holiday "thank you" to all who help us share the Good News with those who have yet to experience it and celebrate the freedom of Christmas.



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ON THE COVER:
Our troops draw
comfort and hope
from the Bible.

(Photograph by
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RECORD

AMERICAN BIBLE SOCIETY

VOLUME 149, NUMBER 4

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A WORD FROM HOME Biblical Perspectives for Living

To help you on your spiritual journey, the American Bible Society now offers free daily or weekly encouragements sent to you via e-mail. Selections include: *Living Lectionary*, based on the church calendar; *Seize the Day*, with Dietrich Bonhoeffer; and *Scripture Reading*, providing Bible verses each morning to help you chart your course. To sign up now as a charter member, visit www.awordfromhome.com.

PLEASE PRAY

 A GUIDE TO PRAYER

AFGHANISTAN — Pray for the restoration of peace and prosperity in Afghanistan. Ask God to provide opportunities to distribute his Word during the rebuilding of the country, particularly New Testaments in the Dari language.


CAMBODIA — Praise God that the Bible Society of Cambodia, through an *Opportunity 21* Scripture distribution program, has recorded Scripture selec-

tions onto audiocassettes and distributed them to churches in remote areas. Because most people in rural areas cannot read, these audio Scriptures, as well as a new literacy program, *Reading by Hearing*, will help church members learn to read God's Word.

KAZAKHSTAN — Give thanks to God for the publication of the new children's book, *My First Picture Book about Creation*, by the Bible Society in Kazakhstan.

Give thanks, too, for the success of the *Bread of Life* program, which provides Scriptures for the elderly and the sick. Please pray for work on the Kazakh Study Bible.

MADAGASCAR — Praise God for the launch of the interconfessional Malagasy Bible and for funds raised during celebrations to mark the 175th anniversary of publishing Luke's Gospel in Malagasy. ■

 We encourage you to send your letters to: Editor, American Bible Society Record, 1865 Broadway, New York, NY 10023-7505. Telephone: 212-408-8754. Note: For questions for the American Bible Society not related to the Record, please call 212-408-1200. www.americanbible.org

SHARING THE

WORD

Military Bibles for the Troops



Picture a winter night in Iraq; a truck carrying a small contingent of soldiers pulls away from an American compound. Huddled together in the back, the troops shiver as their breath balloons into white puffs escaping into the darkness.

The truck weaves through the night, dodging the rusty, mangled skeletons of cars strewn on pavements pockmarked by rocket hits. On this patrol, each soldier peers through night-vision goggles at a landscape transformed into a fuzzy mix of white, gray and sea-foam green, and human shapes appear as chalky green silhouettes.

When the patrol reaches its destination, the driver turns off the ignition and, in the restored quiet, the snap of a twig or crunch of gravel shouts out of the stillness. It is Christmas Eve, but for these servicemen and women, it's another tense night on patrol.

On the other side of the world, the husbands or wives of these soldiers read the Christmas story to their children — children eager for the comfort, hope and joy that the Bible has brought to many previous generations of boys and girls.

DISTANT, BUT NOT FORGOTTEN

Though the soldiers face constant danger, their thoughts and

concerns center on the loved ones they've left behind. "The anxiety level among the troops can be very high," says Chaplain Paul Sutter. "They can't provide care for [their families], or help them or even celebrate with them, especially around Christmas time." Chaplain Sutter has been stationed overseas in the Middle East and elsewhere for more than two years, and has ministered to thousands of military personnel.

"There's almost a disconnect for the troops," he says. "The people that love them are far away, and the Bible becomes the familiar warming sense of that love." He says that even if the soldiers do not attend services regularly, they tell him, "At least I have the Word with me while I am away."

DRAWING SOLACE FROM GOD'S WORD

It is nearly 7:00 a.m., and the sun rises quickly at this latitude. The sky brightens from deep indigo to grayish white to pure azure in less than an hour. The night patrol is finished, and the group heads back to base through a nearby village. Sidewalks, deserted and silent during the night, clatter with the sound of shopkeepers opening corrugated shutters, and cars fill the streets. Though exhausted, the soldiers must remain on high alert until they reach the American compound.

Once inside, the troops attend Christmas services and speak with a chaplain. Lt. Cl. Irvine Bryer, troop support chaplain, from Fort Gillem, Ga., has conducted many worship services and Bible studies. The sessions usually begin with very little dialogue, but when Chaplain Bryer asks about a favorite passage, the soldiers open up. "All of them like the 23rd Psalm," he says, "and then another will say that he likes to read about David. '...he was loved and cared

B Y J A M E S W A L K E R



OF PEACE IN

IRAQ



KINGDOM ASSIGNMENT

Supporting Our Soldiers

Every day, at the Dallas/Fort Worth (DFW) International Airport, nearly 270 servicemen and women are processed for deployment overseas.

While awaiting departure, many of the soldiers visit one of the airport's four chapels. Anne Marlowe Golding, one of the associate chaplains assigned to the DFW Airport Interfaith Chaplaincy, ministers to many of the troops, pointing them to hope from the Scriptures. Earlier this year, the pastor of the Irving Bible Church gave Chaplain Golding and other parishioners a dollar coin each and challenged them to use it to advance the Kingdom of God. "Right away I knew what my assignment would be," she says.

She remembered meeting American Bible Society board member Diane Linen Powell and her husband, Edward "Ned" Powell, Jr., the president of the USO, who were opening a facility at the airport.

"Diane pulled me aside and told me 'we have these great new Bibles,' " a new Military Bible the American Bible Society has developed with the aid of armed service chaplains.

This caught Chaplain Golding's interest — the Airport Chaplaincy provides "deployment packs" for soldiers. Each pack, donated by Campus Crusade for Christ International, includes a devotional guide, an olive wood cross and a New Testament. After reviewing the camouflage-covered pocket-size Bible, Chaplain Golding concluded, "This is a complete Bible with study aids, notes, hymns, quotes from Christian leaders and aids for personal evangelism." She adds, "It really is a great version, high quality, helpful and user-friendly," and just right for military personnel.

So, with her "kingdom" coin and some of her own money, she purchased a case for distribution at the interfaith chapel. To get more, she appealed to friends for support and has already received more than \$2,000.

"Each time I put this Bible into the hands of a soldier boarding the plane, I think of Isaiah 55.11 that says God's Word shall not return empty and without accomplishing what he desires," she says.

At these moments, soldiers often ask her to pray with them one-on-one or in a group. "They request prayer for a wife or husband, their children, and for the Iraqi people, especially the women and children," says the chaplain.

Every moment, these men and women face uncertainty, "they don't know if they will be back in their bunks at the end of the day," she adds. But prayer and the strength and comfort from God's Word can provide reassurance in these uncertain times. ■

—James Walker



LARRY FERREN



MIKE BRENNAN

"My mission is to bring God to the soldiers and the soldiers to God."

Chaplain Nagler

for by the Lord and he was a warrior." Soon they are talking about their own worries — for loved ones and the community that awaits their return.

Chaplain Steven Nagler, now stationed at Fort Hamilton in Brooklyn, N.Y., shares the Scriptures with servicemen and servicewomen so ". . . their spiritual life raises a notch. My mission is to bring God to the soldiers and the soldiers to God." Chaplain Nagler cultivates a friendly atmosphere at the chapel and encourages the soldiers by sharing verses from the Bible. When they stop by the chapel, he says, "they usually ask for a Bible."

The special military Bible Chaplain Nagler uses was developed by the American Bible Society with advice from the top Christian chaplains of each branch of the armed services. The Bible uses the *Good News Translation (GNT)* with a section that highlights passages particularly relevant to military personnel and their families. It also includes the military code of conduct and counsel on effective military leadership.

"We have many Bibles," says Chaplain Nagler, "but the military Bible is very popular."

THE COMMUNITY OF FAITH CAN HELP

Although Chaplain Nagler and Chaplain Bryer will be stationed in the United States this Christmas, many chaplains and soldiers are still overseas, away from family, friends and community, often alone with their thoughts and prayers.

As a member of the American Bible Society family, you can reach out to military personnel serving overseas during this Christmas season. "Pray for our brothers and sisters that they will come home safe," Chaplain Bryer asks. "We hope that we can arrive at that point one day, when Christ not only comes into our lives but to the lives of all men everywhere." ■

(American Bible Society Donor Relationship Correspondent Carmen Feliciano contributed to the research for this article. Call her toll free at 866-895-4448 to donate military Bibles to the troops.)

To order the special military Bible or to learn more about our Scripture programs, please visit www.americanbible.org or write to: American Bible Society, 1865 Broadway, New York, NY 10023.

AMERICAN BIBLE SOCIETY

MAKING WARM CONNECTIONS ON A FRIGID DAY

BY DAVID SINGER



DAVID SINGER

Larry Jones

In the heart of Harlem, 12 tractor-trailers filled with food staples lined 138th Street as the American Bible Society joined with *Feed The Children* and Abyssinian Baptist Church to offer food for both body and soul. More than 5,000 people came out on a blustery day last December to receive food, Bibles, Scripture CDs and coloring books for their children.

Many of the recipients talked freely about their faith and the charity shown to them. When asked what she learned from reading the Scriptures, Patricia Conway, 41, said, "If you give it to God, you'll do all right. Give it all to him. Give it to Jesus — I surrender. He's there. He's always there. I know."

Then tears formed as Patricia explained how she had lost the beauty parlor she owned for 14 years on 125th Street. "In the process of losing everything, I gained a heart. I know I'm blessed. Better than blessed. Thank you, Lord."

She said of the Bible she'd been given, "My soul needs to be fed. It does. And it is being fed. I got three beautiful sons and I had a husband, but I got Jesus and that's enough for me."

Andre Crawton, 48, said the combined distribution of food and Bibles was a great idea. He said his favorite book of the Bible was, "the whole book of Job, because God allowed Satan to test Job, and through everything, Job still believed in God." Andre then drew a contemporary application: "With all the turmoil that's going on in the world today, I mean, that's the test — to find someone who can believe in God in the face of all the suffering."

He saw a parallel between his time in jail and Job's trials; Scripture, "... was the only thing that kept my sanity. I read it before I went to jail, but in jail, believing in God just kept my sanity. Even though I put myself there, I did what I did to get there, ... I still believed in God through-out it all, and I believe he ... made me a better person."

Patience Goyez, 35, who moved to Harlem from Nigeria two years earlier, talked about how she draws strength daily

from the Scriptures, "When I'm going through the Scripture, I find that certain passages talk about me. When I'm in problems and I feel like getting depressed, I find myself opening [a passage] very close to the situation at hand, and I get strengthened."

Larry Jones, president of *Feed The Children* said that this was the biggest distribution effort to date. The response from people in the neighborhood showed that real needs were being met in a holistic way. ■

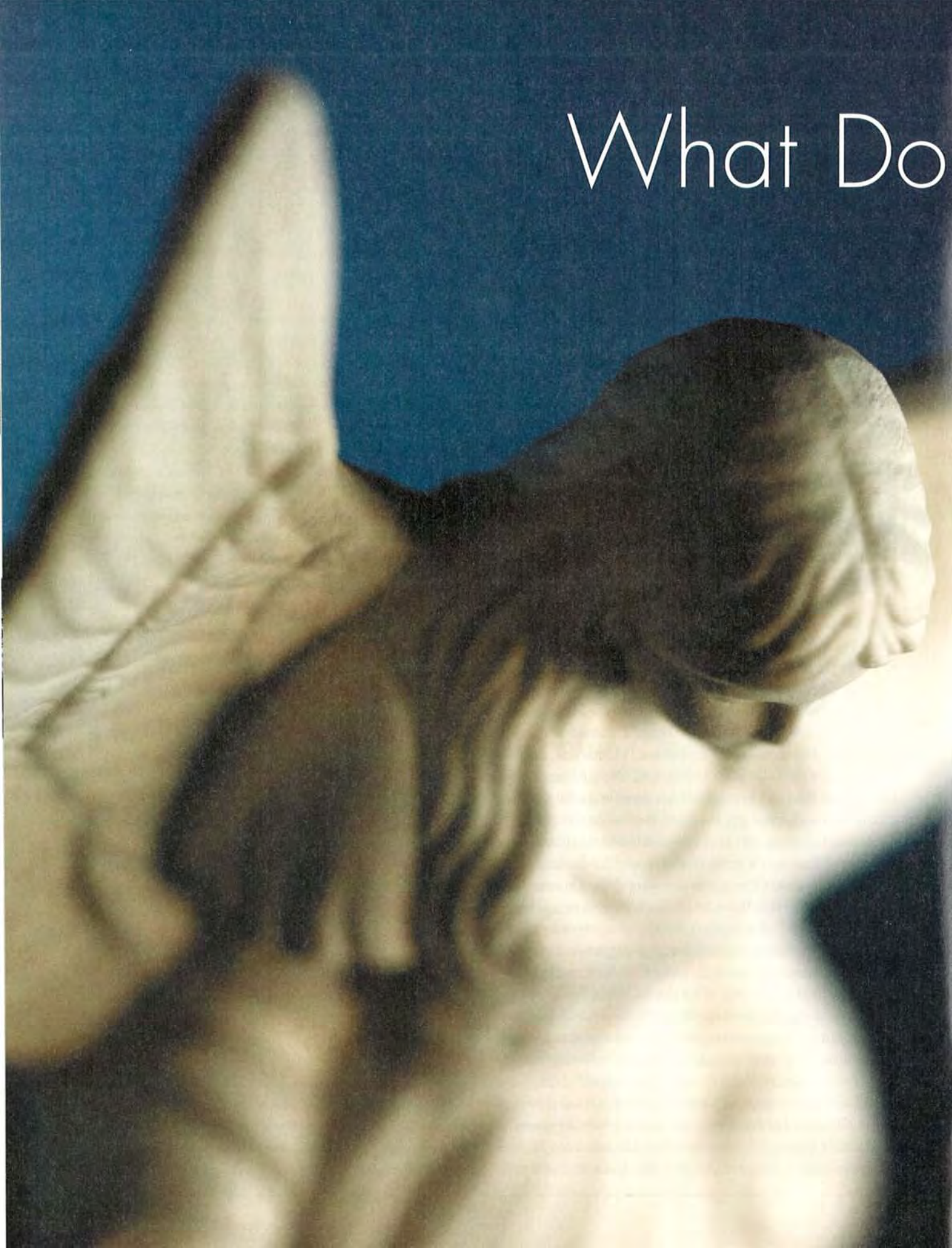
To find out more about satisfying spiritual hunger, visit our Web site at www.americanbible.org.



DAVID SINGER

Tierra Alexander was grateful to receive her own Bible. She said she valued her relationship with God, "because I've got a lot of stuff in my life that I shouldn't have done and I need forgiveness."

What Do



We REALLY Want for Christmas?

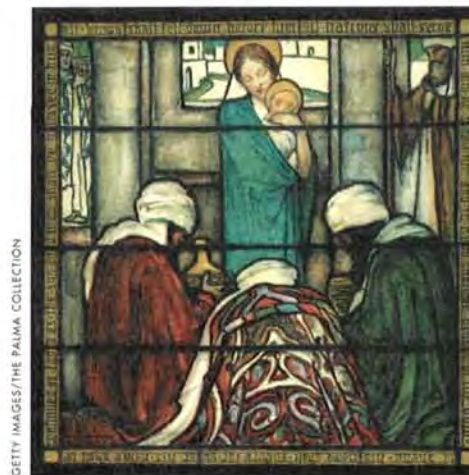
The Holy Scriptures form a seamless tapestry of how God, out of his goodness, provides for our restoration; the history of its weaving spans more than a thousand years. Seven centuries before the first Christmas, the prophet Isaiah anticipated Christ's sacrificial suffering and future glory. His description was uncanny in its precision. "The Lord says, 'My servant will succeed in his task; he will be highly honored. . . . But because of our sin he was wounded, beaten because of the evil we did . . . his death was a sacrifice to bring forgiveness . . . He willingly gave his life and shared the fate of evil men.'" (Isaiah 52.13-53.12)

In Acts, Chapter 8, the Apostle Philip uses these same passages from Isaiah to explain the good news about Jesus to an Ethiopian official: "He was like a sheep taken to be slaughtered . . ."

Dozens of times throughout the New Testament, reference is made to Old Testament promises of a coming benefactor — each anticipating Christmas. Some include "insider" details about the history-changing significance of Jesus' life. Isaiah 42.6 and 49.6 promise that this servant would be ". . . a light to the nations — so that all the world may be saved," a seemingly unlikely prediction of God's intervention on behalf of *all people*, including Gentiles, in what were at the time thought of as thoroughly Jewish writings.

John the Baptist quoted Isaiah 40.4-6 in defining his own ministry of "making way" for the coming of "God's glory for all to see," and referred to Isaiah 42.1-4 — promising a servant who would "bring justice to every nation." The Gospel of Matthew references Isaiah 7.14 in which God promises the coming of Immanuel, or "God is with us." Matthew quotes Isaiah to substantiate that Jesus was God's fulfillment of this promised incarnational presence — a promise that aroused centuries of anticipation and longing.

The essence of Jesus' life, his celestial conquest of evil, was alluded to as far back as Genesis 3.15b. God, in pronouncing judgment on the serpent for its beguiling treachery, foretold the enmity between Eve's offspring (Jesus) and the serpent. Mel Gibson graphically portrayed this moment in his film *The Passion of the Christ*, when actor Jim Caviezel, as Jesus, smashed a threatening snake with his foot: ". . . her offspring will crush your head, and you will bite her offspring's heel."



GETTY IMAGES/THE PALMA COLLECTION

Setting Expectations High Enough


BY DAVID SINGER

PROMISES TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE

Jesus began his ministry — gave an inaugural address to outline his work agenda — by reading from Isaiah 61.1-2. “The Sovereign Lord has filled me with his Spirit. He has chosen me and sent me to bring good news to the poor, to heal the brokenhearted, to announce relief to the captives and freedom to those in prison. He has sent me to proclaim that the time has come when the Lord will save his people and defeat their enemies. He has sent me to comfort those who mourn . . .”

This interplay of a thousand years of Old Testament prophecy — God’s promises of redemption and release from sin and its oppression — were applied by New Testament writers and by Jesus himself as authentication of his calling. They project God’s final and harmonious satisfaction of our deepest longings and the only remedy that could sooth our deepest hurts and bring inner peace. These promises of a servant king, the bearer of God’s glory, seem too good to be true. The Christ offers forgiveness, brings about justice and, as God with us, reminds us of “the good old days” when God walked with Adam and Eve in the garden.

But only a select few took special notice of the first Christmas. Many were outsiders, lowly shepherds, who were summoned by a host of angels, and Magi from the East, who



We cannot comprehend
the core of Christmas
unless we look beyond
ourselves. . .

relied on a promise from Scripture to find the Messiah. Matthew records that they were seeking out the “ruler-shepherd,” foretold in Micah 5.2, who was to bring peace from, of all places, little Bethlehem. And though they brought gifts fit for a king, and a king’s burial, they were apparently not put off by the meager, unadorned circumstances in which they found the royal baby.

ELEVATING OUR PERSPECTIVE

Jesus often, if not always, confounds our expectations — confronts us with the contrast between our desires and what really counts — what Christmas really means. None of God’s prophetic Old Testament promises of what the coming savior would bring deal with the issues that normally consume us: wealth, security, position, appearance or health. The promise of Jesus is grounded in internal and eternal issues: forgiveness, salvation, justice, peace, light, freedom and, most of all, God’s glorification in Christ.

We cannot comprehend the core of Christmas unless we look beyond ourselves — raise our gaze above street level. As the Psalmist wrote, “Open my eyes, so that I may see the wonderful truths in your law.” (Psalm 119.18) The Psalmist continues, “I am here on earth for just a little while; do not hide your commands from me. My heart aches with longing; I want to know your judgments at all times.”

The Psalmist knew his limitations; he appealed to God to “open his eyes” to see the beauty of God’s law — that Christ’s challenge for us to be perfect, as God is perfect, is not something we can attain on our own; and not ever attain in this life. Nonetheless, it remains the goal of Christmas.

YEARNING FOR PERFECTION

In *Mere Christianity*, C. S. Lewis wrote, “When [Christ] said ‘Be perfect,’ He meant it. . . . This is the whole of Christianity. There is nothing else. . . . the Church exists for nothing else but to draw men into Christ, to make them little Christs. . . . God became man for no other purpose.”

Lewis goes on to explain, “. . . He warned people to ‘count the cost’ before becoming Christians. ‘Make no mistake,’ He says, ‘if you will let me, I will make you perfect. The moment you put yourself in My hands, that is what you are in for. . . if you choose, you can push Me away. But if you do not push Me away, understand that I am going to see this job through.’”

The Oxford professor also wrote, “. . . holiness . . . [is] what He is determined to produce in every one of us in the end. The job will not be completed in this life; but he means to get us as far as possible before death.” This was the overwhelming news relayed to the shepherds tending their sheep on that first Christmas night, as an army of angels sang praises to God: “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and peace on earth to those with whom he is pleased.”

As with the first Christmas when, following a thousand years of promise, so few were ready or even wanting Christmas to come, are we any more ready? Another two thousand years have passed; what are our expectations as we anticipate the *final* Christmas?

The Apostle Paul summed up our waiting, “. . . all creation groans with pain, like the pain of childbirth. But it is not just creation alone that groans; we who have the Spirit as the first of God’s gifts also groan within ourselves as we wait for God to make us his children and set our whole being free.” (Romans 8.22b-23 *GNT*)

In the Scriptures, God tells us, once again, what to do, what to look for and where to set our expectations. Believers everywhere long and pray for the completion of the Christmas promise — to be set completely free — and, as God’s children, to realize the fullness of our relationship as brothers and sisters in Christ. ■

Speaking to the Blind and Deaf in Egypt

In Egypt, where 42 percent of the population cannot read, the Bible Society of Egypt (BSOE) makes wide use of audio and visual translations of God's Word.

In recent years, the BSOE has produced Scripture cassettes in various dialects of colloquial Arabic. They allow people who are gaining literacy skills to supplement their Bible reading and serve the blind, who can listen to the Scriptures while following along in their Braille Bibles. Even though more than three million cassettes have already been distributed, the demand has not slackened.

This year, 500,000 copies of the Bible Society of Egypt's new Arabic-language cassette, *He Lived Among Us*, about the life and miracles of Jesus will be distributed.

While audio resources provide non-readers access to the Scriptures, they, of course, do not meet the needs of the deaf. And illiteracy rates among deaf Egyptians are as high as among the general population, so the BSOE, in collaboration with Christian organizations that minister to people with disabilities, has turned to producing sign-language videos and books. One organization, Master Media, has developed a series of children's Bible storybooks in both Arabic and sign language.

With help from faithful donors like you, more materials can be created to reach Egyptians, no matter what their ability.



Your **December** gift will bring the Word of God to the Middle East, the Holy Land, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine and Syria. Your **January** gift will support Bible work in India. To find out more about joining the Bible-a-Month Club, fill out the reply form below or write to:

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SEEKERS CLUBS



By Francine Lange Encourage



Edgard Torres and Charisse Ninah

FRANCINE LANGE

school and college students to take leadership roles in their schools and to share the gospel with their peers. The goal, says Edgard, is to bring Christ "to a place where the church doesn't normally have access." He attributes the dramatic change in his own life and in others to his commitment to Christ. "[Students] might have been into drugs or alcohol, they're not anymore. They might have been full of anger, . . . now, they're full of love."

A CLUB WITH AN ETERNAL MISSION

Each club has its own style and agenda, but Bible study is central to the weekly meetings. "Scripture has helped me to see who God is, helped me to see who I am and deal with the things that were not right in my life," says Edgard.

The Bible they use, titled "Real Issues, Real Answers," is a special imprint *Contemporary English Version* from the American Bible Society. The preface includes a devotional guide addressing life issues and spiritual struggle from a young person's perspective.

Sara Gawronski, now majoring in music at Nyack College, says she learned to trust God as she took on new responsibilities. She says one student came for the snacks but remained for the Bible study and eventually made a commitment to follow Christ. "God used the group to help get the teen back on track with God," explains Sara.

HARLEM TO HACKENSACK

Another *Seekers* alumni credits the ministry with helping him form and stabilize his faith. "I saw the example [of Christ] lived in front of me," says Arthur Shadwick, "by kids my own age." He was 14 when he joined a club in his high school in the Bronx. Since no one else in his family was a believer at the time, club support from his peers helped him strengthen his faith and members prayed with him through personal issues. Arthur says not knowing his birth father affected him deeply. But through the study of the Bible, "You know who your heavenly father is," and now, many in his family, including his mother, have come to Christ.

While in college he married a friend from his youth choir

When Edgard Torres visited the new Bible club in his high school, he could not imagine it would change his life — that several years later he would be working for the ministry that made the club possible, and eventually, serve full time as its ministry coordinator. During that first Bible club meeting, a friend asked Edgard if he wanted to get "saved," then explained what it meant to follow Christ. She invited him to pray, and he responded, "Sure, why not, I'll give it a shot."

"And from that point on," Edgard says, "I have never been the same." The Bronx, N.Y., native describes his prior experience living in a single-parent household, taking his first drink at 14 and embellishing his speech with cursing. After that prayer, his love for God deepened, he religiously attended Bible club meetings and joined a church. The next year, as a high school senior, he was elected president of the Bible club.

Led and run by students, *Seekers Christian Fellowships* is comprised of 36 clubs in New York City's schools and colleges, with more than 1,000 members. This cross-cultural and cross-denominational campus ministry springs from Urban Youth Alliance, Inc., a multicultural urban youth organization that works with churches to build, nurture and sustain young inner-city believers and their sense of Christian community. *Seekers* encourages and trains high

PEER PRESSURE

TRAINING TODAY'S TEENS

and they moved to Hackensack, N.J., known to some as "Crackensack" because of widespread drug use in certain neighborhoods. Arthur entered the corporate world, making good money as a computer technician. But he felt God calling him to respond to the needs in his own neighborhood. He would see small children playing unsupervised in the streets until late at night, with few recreational alternatives available.

Last year, he and his wife began Bible studies in their home, and now the Rev. Shadwick pastors a growing congregation at the church he founded, Liberty Worship Center.

He remembers the teaching and support he received as a teenager in *Seekers*, which changed the course of his life. He counsels the young people in his church, "What you do now will affect you for the rest of your life." And he uses one of his favorite Scriptures to underscore God's care for them: "I will bless you with a future filled with hope — a future of success, not of suffering." (Jeremiah 29:11 CEV) ■

For more stories about transformed lives, or to support the American Bible Society's outreach to youth, click on www.americanbible.org.

Ministry Today with Tomorrow in View

Charisse Ninah's passion for youth ministry may have been sparked as far back as fifth grade. On graduation day at her public school in the Bronx, as her family and classmates' families joined in the excitement, she remembers noticing one of her fellow graduates standing alone. His mother would not be attending, and he told Charisse, "I never knew my father."

"I felt really bad for him," she recalls. "Why would I even be concerned about one of my peers' parents? But that was on my mind that day, in fifth grade."

Charisse, who says she was "the epitome of an urban child," was also born into a single-parent household and raised by her grandmother, a strict Pentecostal matriarch. Charisse acted out her rebellion in school, but as graduation approached, the bright student set her sights on the prestigious New York University. There, she completed a bachelor's degree in Psychology and a master's in Public Health.

MINISTER IN TRAINING

While in college her childhood faith began to deepen into a desire to help youth.

"Throughout the years," she explains, "I felt compelled to help these young people that I once went to school with."

When her church in Queens began a college ministry, she joined. "I began to understand that being a Christian was having that relationship with Christ. The Word was my spiritual food, and as I began to know God, I fell in love with him."

Then, one Sunday, the Rev. Wendy Calderón Payne, executive director of Urban Youth Alliance (UYA), Inc., spoke at her church about the organization's history in youth development and leadership. Charisse sent her an e-mail stating: "I'm a Latina woman . . . who's passionate about working with young people." A year passed before UYA was able to bring her on board. In 2002, she became assistant director of *Seekers Christian Fellowships* where she now serves as director.

Charisse emphasizes, "We need to train [young people] and equip them to be the leaders that they can be today," and that "these young people are the ones who are going to win their peers over for Christ."

She fuels the process by funneling Bible club members into leadership training, which



Charisse with her daughter Amaris.

helps them with the practical aspects of running a club and provides a place for potential leaders to offer support and pray together.

Seekers also organizes on-campus debates and citywide events that mobilize students to share their faith with classmates.

Charisse says, "God is using this ministry to be what the Word says is a 'city on a hill that cannot be hidden.' His glory will continue to shine so that all might know that Christ is truly the Way, the Truth and the Life." ■ —Francine Lange

For more about *Seekers* call 718-402-6872 or visit <http://www.uyai.org/seekers.php>.

A LOVE FOR LANGUAGE AND THE GOOD NEWS

BY JAMES WALKER

PROFESSOR STANFORD M. MILLER HAS COMMITTED TO providing the Scriptures around the world in languages that speak to the heart. The Bible, he says, is "the guide to life."

Today Professor Miller is retired, but for 31 years he taught Latin as well as other classes at Los Angeles City College. It is his love of God's Word and Bible history and his interest in translation that steered him to the American Bible Society's *Good News Translation (GNT)*. "Before I started teaching, I took a course at UCLA (University of California, Los Angeles) dealing with the history of the New Testament," he explains. He was especially impressed with the class, which was taught by Dr. Edgar J. Goodspeed, a biblical scholar who was instrumental in bringing everyday English to the New Testament. "After that class I looked at the Bible more deeply."

"I have the *GNT* and other translations, but I was especially impressed when I read the *GNT*. It's a newer translation and is more accurate," he says.



BETH HERZHAFT

His academic career lends some weight to his assessment. Over the years Professor Miller has studied and taught ancient Greek and has read the New Testament in that language, finding it "very readable and interesting." This love of languages led him to become the executive secretary and editor for Alpha Mu Gamma, the National Collegiate Foreign Language Honor Society. While he was editor, his wife Grace helped him with his editing responsibilities.

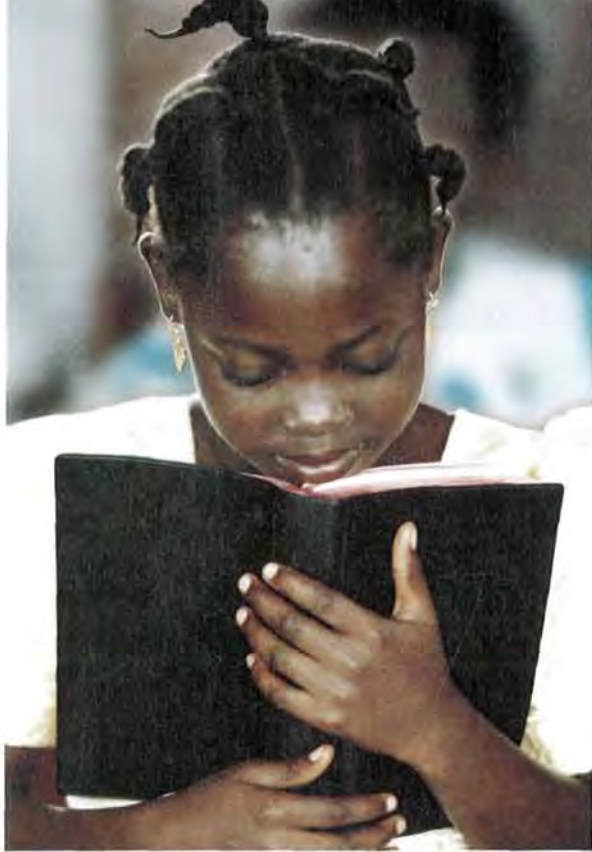
"The Gospel of John has been my favorite book of the Bible since childhood," says the linguist. The *Good News Translation* "opened it up to me, and I really understood the message that the Lord has for all of us."

Ministry and scholarship have always been a part of Miller family life. His grandfather was a Methodist circuit-rider minister, and just after World War II, Professor Miller became a member of Echo Park United Methodist Church in Los Angeles. He met Grace soon after, and they married in 1946. Professor Miller taught adult Sunday school there for nearly 20 years. Grace sang in the choir for about 50 years and she is very active in the women's society. The Millers still attend almost every Sunday service there.

"The first Bible book I ever read was the Gospel of John, when I was about eight or ten years old," he recalls. "Later, I came to love the Psalms; they have so much beauty; they sing to me."

The Millers have supported Bible Society Scripture programs for many years. Thirteen years ago, the Millers enrolled in the *Gift Annuity* program and have made substantial contributions yearly ever since. They know that the annuity will both greatly benefit their retirement years and aid the Bible Society in bringing the Scripture's message of hope to those still waiting to hear its good news. ■

You can obtain more information about planned giving programs sponsored by the American Bible Society by calling the Planned Gift Programs Department at 1-800-820-6227.



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update

I N T E R N A T I O N A L



MARY BROOKS/UBS

▲ AIDS patient Dao (in white T-shirt) with one of her sons, and Nattaya, assistant director of the AIDS Care and Education Center in Thailand.

■ THAILAND

Dao, a patient at the AIDS Care and Education Center in Bangkok, lost her husband to AIDS, and now watches the disease take over her own life as well as that of her 3-year-old son.

When the young boy became so ill that doctors from the hospice caring for him felt that nothing further could be done to save him, they stopped treatment; he quickly deteriorated. Dao talked to Nattaya, the deputy director of the Center, who encouraged her to pray and ask God to spare her son.

Soon after Dao began praying, her son began to revive. Before long, he was even able to eat rice, much to the doctors' astonishment.

Dao is convinced that only God could have brought her son back from the brink of death. She regularly

reads the New Testament in her quest to get to know God better. Through the staff at the AIDS Care and Education Center, she has also received the Thailand Bible Society's booklet *HIV and the Positive Life*.

■ WALES

The Sixth World Assembly of the United Bible Societies (UBS) convened in Wales this August to map out strategies for sharing God's Word in the 21st century and to acknowledge 200 years of Bible Society ministry. The American Bible Society, instrumental in founding the 142-member fellowship of United Bible Societies, was represented by Dr. Eugene B. Habecker, President, the Rev. Dr. Lamar Vest, Chairman of the Board of Trustees, and the Rev. Dr. Don Argue, Board member and Chair of the International Relations Committee.

Sally Shoemaker Robinson, who chairs the UBS Global Board, gave



NEIL PITCHFORD

▲ Dancers performing at UBS World Assembly in Wales.

highlights of the Board's stewardship report. The theme of the Assembly, "God's Unchanging Word for a Changing World," is based on Hebrews 13:8, "Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday, today and forever." The UBS will help national Bible

Societies pool training resources so that they can develop more effective ways to present and share the Scriptures.

■ ZIMBABWE

The Tonga people living in Zimbabwe



BIBLE SOCIETY OF ZIMBABWE

▲ This summer, Edward Mutema, right, general secretary of the Bible Society of Zimbabwe, presented audiocassettes of the New Testament recorded in the Tonga language to a group of pastors in the Binga region in Zimbabwe. The residents of this area were often called "the forgotten people" because they lived in total isolation for many generations.

recently received a valuable Scripture gift from the Bible Society of Zimbabwe (BSZ). Most of the 112,000 Tonga live in the remote Binga region in Zimbabwe's Zambezi valley and many are illiterate. So the BSZ developed materials, such as *New Reader* Scripture selections and the Tonga New Testament on audiocassette. To date, 16,000 selections have been distributed to Binga pastors. The BSZ is also helping organize "listening groups" for when the audiocassettes are played, to which they will also supply 4,000 *New Reader* selections. ■

■ WASHINGTON, D.C.

The National Museum of the American Indian in Washington, D.C., which opened in September, includes a display of 200 rare Bibles in 175 languages from native peoples of the world. The American Bible Society loaned several rare Scriptures for this exhibition, including the second edition of Eliot's Indian Bible, published in 1685 (the second Bible printed in the New World), and the Gospel of Luke, a bilingual version in the Aymara and Spanish languages, published in 1829. It is the first Scripture printed in a native language of Latin America.

■ NEW YORK

"On September 11, my husband was murdered." Those were the opening words from Cheryl McGuinness, the widow of American Airlines Flight 11 copilot Tom McGuinness, whose jet was hijacked and flown into the World Trade Center by terrorists three years ago.

During a special remembrance, she told American Bible Society staffers about her storybook life, marrying her high school sweetheart, giving birth to two sons and growing together through their faith in Christ. "Our family had much peace, joy and contentment," she



DAVID SINGER

▲ Cheryl McGuinness speaks at Bible House on Sept. 11.

God. What the terrorists meant for evil, God has used for good. My prayer life deepened, my time in his Word increased and I developed a whole new realization and appreciation for who I am as his child. I am not a 9/11 widow; I'm Cheryl, God's creation."

Mrs. McGuinness has launched a ministry, *Beauty Beyond the Ashes* (also accessed through www.beautybeyondtheashes.com), to offer a message of courage, determination and hope to other women who are suffering.

"God truly has shown me that there really is beauty beyond the ashes of September 11th."

■ NEW YORK

In November, the President's Leadership Council of the American Bible Society will host the inaugural

said, "and it flowed into all parts of our lives."

She added, "I found over time that forgiveness grows out of trusting God, obeying God and depending on

Global Bible Summit to involve more people in the Bible Society's ministry and outreach in the United States and around the world.

During the two-day event (which is to be held annually), keynote speaker Dr. Os Guinness, an author and cultural analyst, will speak about the Bible's cultural relevance in the 21st century. Labib Madanat, executive secretary of the Palestinian Bible Society, will talk about ministry to youth in the Middle East. Inner-city youth will give testimonials of lives changed through the Bible Society's *Elementz of Life™* program. Dr. Liana Lupas, curator of the Scripture Collection, will take the audience through an historical background of the Scriptures.

A panel discussion including urban and international youth will share "insider" perspectives and the impact of Bible Society ministry in their lives.

■ SOUTH CAROLINA

Proving that no one is too young to catch a vision for sharing God's Word, children from the Vacation Bible School at Pine Grove Church in Givhans, S.C., sent the Bible Society a check of \$341 to be used to send Bibles to China. ■

■ THE BIBLE IN HISPANIC AMERICA

This September, the American Bible Society paid tribute to two people who have used their public prominence as a forum for Christian witness in the Hispanic community. Mariano "Marianito" Rivera, Jr., with his grandmother at his side, spoke on behalf of New York Yankees closer Mariano Rivera, "My father is sorry he can't be here because he may have to save a game today. May God bless you." The other honoree, former Congressman Robert Garcia, spoke about his love for God's Word: "When I was in my personal valleys, [my wife and I] read the Bible from beginning to end." The Bible Society will also be honoring Hispanics in California and Texas.



FRANCINE LANGE

quiet time

We hope you will use this guide in your daily study of the Bible. Please write to tell us how you use it.

DECEMBER 2004

Filled with Hope and Spreading the Joy of the Lord

- 1 Matthew 25.1-13
- 2 Matthew 25.31-46
- 3 Revelation 1.1-20
- 4 Romans 1.1-17
- SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT**
- 5 Matthew 3.1-12
- 6 Malachi 3.1-8
- 7 Matthew 11.1-19
- 8 Isaiah 25.1-10
- 9 Isaiah 33.1-16
- 10 Isaiah 33.17-24
- 11 Isaiah 35.1-10
- THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT**
- 12 Zephaniah 3.14-20
- 13 Isaiah 42.1-17
- 14 Isaiah 43.1-13
- 15 Isaiah 44.21-28
- 16 Isaiah 51.1-16
- 17 Isaiah 52.1-12
- 18 Isaiah 55.1-13
- FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT**
- 19 Micah 5.2-9
- 20 Isaiah 7.1-9
- 21 Isaiah 7.10-25
- 22 Matthew 1.1-17

- 23 Matthew 1.18-25
- 24 Luke 2.1-20
- CHRISTMAS DAY**
- 25 John 1.1-18
- SUNDAY**
- 26 Acts 6.1-15
- 27 Acts 7.1-22
- 28 Acts 7.23-43
- 29 Acts 7.44-8.1
- 30 Acts 8.2-25
- 31 Acts 8.26-40

JANUARY 2005

- Rooted in Christ and Confessing Jesus as Lord*
- 1 Colossians 1.1-14
 - SUNDAY**
 - 2 Colossians 1.15-23
 - 3 Colossians 1.24-2.5
 - 4 Colossians 2.6-23
 - 5 Colossians 3.1-17
 - EPIPHANY**
 - 6 Matthew 2.1-15
 - 7 Matthew 2.16-23
 - 8 Matthew 4.12-25
 - SUNDAY**
 - 9 Matthew 8.1-17
 - 10 Matthew 8.18-34

- 11 Matthew 9.1-13
- 12 Matthew 9.14-26
- 13 Matthew 9.27-38
- 14 Matthew 10.1-25
- 15 Matthew 10.26-42
- ECUMENICAL SUNDAY**
- 16 John 17.1-26
- 17 Matthew 16.1-12
- WEEK OF PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY BEGINS**
- *18 Matthew 16.13-28
- 19 Matthew 11.1-19
- 20 Matthew 11.20-30
- 21 Matthew 12.1-14
- 22 Matthew 12.15-32
- SUNDAY**
- 23 Matthew 12.33-50
- 24 Romans 10.5-17
- 25 Acts 9.1-25
- 26 Acts 9.26-43
- 27 Acts 10.1-33
- 28 Acts 10.34-48
- 29 Acts 6.1-15
- SUNDAY**
- 30 Acts 7.1-29
- 31 Acts 7.30-8.3

** The Octave for Christian Unity is January 18-25, 2005.*

IN MEMORIAM

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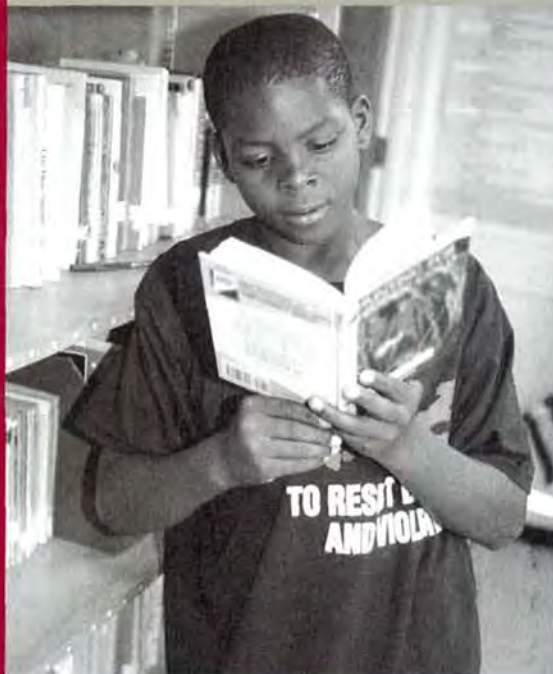
My parents, John and Crystal Espich
Given by: Mrs. Alice Louise Pollert

Our daughter, Rachel Diane Gibson
Given by: Janice and Clyde Gibson

Our parents,
Mr. and Mrs. Charles Wilkman
Given by: Ester and Daniel Wilkman

CORRECTION: In the September/October 2004 issue of the *Record* we published the wrong date for **Bible Sunday**. The correct date is **Sunday, November 21**.

Give the Bread of Life ... this Christmas!



Christmas can be the most wonderful time of the year, especially if you're a child! But sadly, thousands of children will spend Christmas hungry, without comfort . . . hope . . . or the joy of knowing the Savior.

That's why, this Christmas, the American Bible Society is partnering with **Feed The Children**, one of our country's largest hunger-

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