

Christian HealthCare

NEWSLETTER

MEMBER LETTER:

You strengthened my faith when I was weak

I was not prepared to hear that I could have skin cancer, especially being a few months pregnant. I certainly felt weak in my faith at that moment.

But when the letters of prayer and encouragement started coming, I felt so amazingly blessed to be a part of the Body of Christ. The sincerity of the members' notes and their generosity helped to strengthen my faith, reminding me that we are family in Christ no matter the distance.

I praise God that all the cancerous tissue was removed, but more so give Him thanks for the love and kindness I received through this ministry.

Tawny Haithcock
Blacksburg, Virginia

The true “true meaning of Christmas”

Thanks, Linus

by Chuck Colson

Amid the avalanche of TV Christmas specials that hit our screens at this time of year, there's one little gem that always stands out. It's a simple, unpretentious cartoon that's several decades old now, but it still usually manages to earn great ratings and has been loved by many generations.

I'm guessing it's no coincidence that, out of all the Christmas specials that claim to tell us all about “the true meaning of Christmas,” this little cartoon is the one that everyone remembers and watches over and over again—the one that really gets the meaning.

I'm talking, of course, about *A Charlie Brown Christmas*. There are so many things to recommend this show, not least of which is its gentle skewering of the commercialism that surrounds our modern idea of Christmas. “Fake Christmas,” as my colleague Anne Morse has called it at our blog, *The Point*.

Oddly enough, commercialism has gotten so much worse since *A Charlie Brown Christmas* was produced in 1965, that this charming cartoon has become more and more relevant every year. There's hardly a viewer who can't identify with Charlie Brown's feeling that, somewhere in all the hype and advertising, the real meaning of Christmas has been lost.

But there are lots of anti-consumerist

messages out there every Christmas. The really great thing about *A Charlie Brown Christmas* is that it doesn't just critique the commercialism; it offers something to counter it—something real and significant.

It doesn't just say that the true meaning of Christmas is family, or giving, or kindness, or any of the other meanings that some of the other TV specials give us—concepts that are nice and admirable in themselves, but that totally miss the mark.

In simple, sincere, but utterly effective fashion, *A Charlie Brown Christmas*

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Sharing Summary from November

| | | |
|-----------------|--------------|---|
| Shares: | \$14,621,183 | Personalized prayer requests of the members with Needs are in the Prayer Guide. Please use your version of the Prayer Guide to support the members assigned to you. |
| Needs: | \$14,494,537 | |
| In Negotiation: | \$ — | |
| New Needs: | 2,052 | |
| Total Needs: | 4,085 | |
| New Rewards: | 180 | Member Households: 50,323 (as of 10/21/15) |
| Miscarriages: | 37 | |
| Final Rewards: | 9 | |

Contact Us: 877-764-2426 samaritanministries.org/members

| Questions about? | Email | Phone Menu |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------|
| Your medical need | needs@samaritanministries.org | 1 - 1 |
| Shares you are sending or receiving | shares@samaritanministries.org | 1 - 2 |
| Your membership | membership@samaritanministries.org | 1 - 3 |

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Member Services Manager

Remember:



SEND A NOTE—
Burdens can be lightened emotionally as we encourage one another in the Lord.



PAY YOUR SHARE—
Burdens can be lightened physically as we do our part to financially meet others' needs as they would in our time of need.



ALWAYS STAY ALERT IN PRAYER—
Burdens can be lightened spiritually as we unite to call upon the God of the impossible.

The Bread of Life in the House of Bread

by Rob Slane

At the beginning of the book of Ruth, an Israelite family leaves Bethlehem to sojourn in Moab. The reason for this is that there is a famine in the land:

In the days when the judges ruled there was a famine in the land, and a man of Bethlehem in Judah went to sojourn in the country of Moab, he and his wife and his two sons. The name of the man was Elimelech and the name of his wife Naomi, and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Chilion. They were Ephrathites from Bethlehem in Judah. They went into the country of Moab and remained there. (Ruth 1:1-3)

These seemingly small details are not incidental, and there are in fact two big ironies taking place. One is that they are leaving the land of promise, the place that Yahweh gave to the descendants of Abraham for an inheritance, and they are going down into Moab, which is one of Israel's traditional enemies. In other words, the land of blessing and of plenty has become barren, and this family thinks they can no longer survive, while the land outside the covenant promise at that time has enough food to spare to sustain them. Why is this so? The first verse of the book tells us that this episode occurred in the days of the Judges. If you go back and read the Book of Judges, you see that Israel was serially disobedient, so the famine in Ruth occurs when God's people are rebelling against Him.

But there is a second, even greater irony. The name Bethlehem means "house of bread." Elimelech's family

was from the House of Bread, but they end up leaving because there is not enough bread there.

At the end of the story, Naomi, by this time widowed and having lost both her sons, returns with one of her daughters-in-law, Ruth, to the House of Bread. It is harvest time, and Ruth begins to glean in Boaz's field. But such is God's blessing on her and on Naomi, that Ruth, who

God's Son was born at a time when the world was famished.

is expecting to glean just enough to give her and her mother-in-law a chance of survival, is given abundance by Boaz. The book then closes with the two of them marrying and having a son, Obed, who is the grandfather of David—also a Bethlehemite. One of the many points of the book is that the House of Bread will not remain empty, but that God will fill it abundantly. It starts off with famine and sorrow, and ends with plenty and joy.

Fast forward just over a millennium, and there is another famine throughout all Israel. Only this time the famine is not physical, but spiritual and moral. Real belief is scarce. Unrighteousness abundant. The elite are so corrupt that John the Baptist describes them as a "brood of vipers." And into this spiritual and moral famine comes this:

In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria. And all went to be registered, each to his own town. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. And she gave birth to her firstborn Son and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths and laid Him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn. (Luke 2:1-7)

The Child is "the Son of David, the Son of Abraham" (Matthew 1:1), and He is born into the city of David. It is the same city that Naomi left and returned to with Ruth all those years before—Bethlehem, the House of Bread. Is this an incidental detail? Is anything in the Bible incidental? What we are meant to understand is that the House of Bread is once again being filled, only this time God is filling it, not with bread which perishes, but with One Who would later say this of Himself:

"I am the Bread of Life; whoever comes to Me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in Me shall never thirst." (John 6:35)

Jesus, the Bread of Life, was therefore born into the House of Bread in the midst of a spiritual and moral

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Paul and Jenny Speed

WIT Ministries

by Marcia Krahn

Open. Broken. Free. Whatever It Takes. God used these words to transform Paul and Jenny Speed from “wonderful hypocrites” living in a dying marriage into a joyful couple bringing God’s freedom and restoration to thousands through WIT Ministries.

As newlyweds, Paul and Jenny expected married life to be great. After all, they were strong believers who purposed to impact the world for Christ. But when issues arose in their marriage, Paul increasingly turned to the pornography that had blighted his youth. He told himself that what Jenny and the kids didn’t know wouldn’t hurt them, and that he could protect them even when his life was “spinning more and more

out of control.”

To those around them, they looked like they had it all together—active in the church, raising their children on 50 acres, a model homeschool family—but Paul and Jenny knew differently.

“God, does my hidden sin have anything to do with the turmoil in our marriage?” Paul cried out in desperation. Knowing God’s answer was “yes,” on November 18, 2002, he asked Jenny if they could talk after the kids were in bed. Paul confessed that he was bound by Internet pornography.

While Jenny was relieved to discover that their problems were not all her fault, she was devastated that he had hidden his sin from her for fourteen years.

During that first week, Paul and Jenny became completely open with each other, praying through anything that came to mind, repenting, and asking God to take back the ground they’d lost.

The Lord led Paul to Psalm 51:6. He learned that God longed for truth in his innermost being and would give him wisdom. Paul realized that he, the one who should have protected Jenny, was not “such a great guy” after all. He had allowed others to blame Jenny, and had withdrawn from his family out of guilt and shame. Paul told Jenny, “This isn’t your fault. This was my choice, and



my sin. I am going to dig into God’s Word, and I am going to find the keys to freedom.”

God began to set forth the steps Paul should take to freedom, and what was needed to restore their marriage. As they were praying, God brought the words “open, broken, free” to both of them.

Open. Being “open and transparent, not hiding or covering sin, but being honest about yourself and your past.” Paul knew his hidden sin “rotted him from the inside,” and he wanted everything out in the open.

Broken. “Broken over sin and what it does to your relationship with God, to you, and to others. Brokenness says, ‘I will not go back to sin. I will not blame others for my sin.’”

Paul asked God to reveal what kept him bound, for pride prevented him from seeing himself as he really was. The Lord showed him his real stronghold was hypocrisy, failing



to be open about his struggles and broken over his sin.

Free. Freedom is becoming “the person God called you to be.” Paul knew he needed freedom and determined to do “whatever it takes” to break free of the bondages in his inner life.

Paul’s bondage had damaged more than he realized. He hadn’t understood that his sin opened a door for the enemy to harass Jenny. His confession released Jenny from nightmares that had tormented her for years.

Out of that awareness, Paul and Jenny talked with each of their children in an age-appropriate way. Paul was heartbroken to find their children “did not escape unscathed because of my sin.” But after he prayed for them, watching their

faces lift and seeing them almost bounce from the room filled him with incredible joy. Immoral dreams and thoughts, and various temptations they faced, vanished.

Especially painful was Paul’s talk with one of his sons. Twice that summer Paul had taken his son to his office. When Paul left for a time, his son was able to find the very sites Paul had been on. “It had to be the enemy who led him, because he had never been on a computer before, and how could he have found those sites on his own? He saw the things I saw, and it broke my heart.” The discovery produced a greater brokenness in Paul. “This was me. I had allowed this. My sin was causing my wife and kids to suffer, to be tormented by the evil one.”

After seven strenuous months of

working through issues, Jenny knew their family could thrive again. Paul was consistently resisting temptation and taking responsibility for his family. Others began to notice and came to them for prayer and counsel.

When a leader at a homeschool convention in Tennessee requested that Paul share his testimony, Jenny asked if he would tell it all. “I will never have this opportunity again,” Paul said. “There are men in this room who are in bondage just like I was, and if I don’t say the words, they won’t have the courage, they won’t do it.”

When he got off stage, he realized he’d just told 2,500 adults that he had been “addicted to Internet pornography, abdicated authority for my family, and not loved my wife.”

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Why SMI?

For years, Paul and Jenny Speed struggled without health insurance. Then, while speaking at a women’s conference, Jenny’s jaw was aching so badly that Her friend Brenda noticed. Jenny admitted there wasn’t money for her to get checked out. Brenda, a Samaritan member for years, advised Jenny to “really, really pray” about joining Samaritan Ministries, because her family “just loved it.” Jenny shrugged it off. “People say things like that all the time,” she thought, nodding her head politely. A few days later a packet came from Brenda with information about Samaritan, including an application form. Jenny says, “Others had told us about it for years, but Brenda put it in our hands and said this is what you need.”

In 2014, their son Josiah broke his femur while wakeboarding, which ended in surgery and three

days in a hospital. Paul recounts that “our negotiated amount—tens of thousands of dollars—was paid down to the penny. That was amazing!”

Paul no longer worries what they will do if something happens. He also values being able to talk with a real person when he calls Samaritan Ministries. “Every time I call, I get somebody who is able to walk me through what I need to do, even coaching me in how to negotiate bills.”

An added blessing is that three of the couples serving as team leaders for WIT Ministries are also Samaritan Ministries members. Paul says that having Samaritan for health care “puts us at rest about so many things. It’s one of the wisest decisions we’ve ever made.”

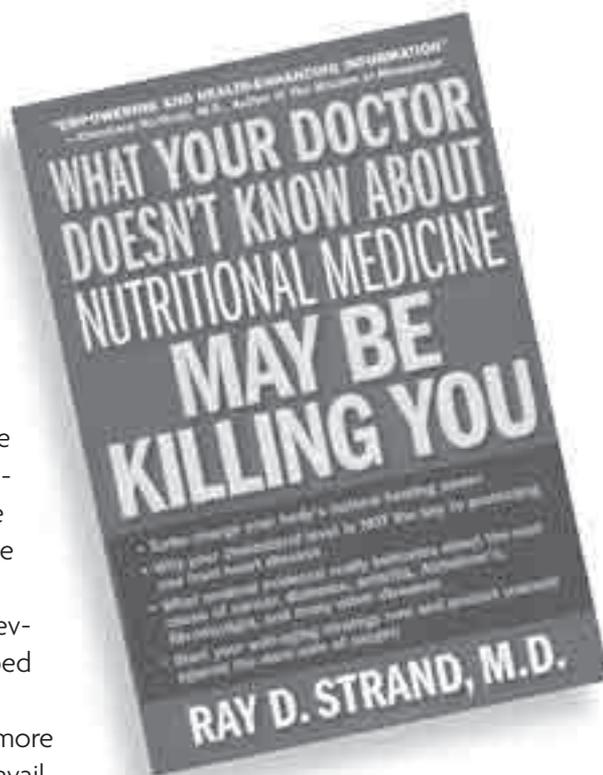
What your doctor doesn't know about nutritional medicine may be killing you by Ray D. Strand, M.D.

Reviewed by Jed Stuber

Dr. Ray Strand describes himself as once being a prototypical doctor. Whenever his patients would ask him about vitamins, minerals, or nutritional supplements, his “toes would curl.” Then he would give one of his pat answers: “They’re just snake oil.” “Vitamins just make expensive urine.” “You can get all the required nutrients by eating the right foods.”

However, over a period of several years his wife, Liz, developed increasingly debilitating health problems and took more and more prescribed medications to no avail. By the Strand's tenth anniversary she was in constant pain, could no longer get out of bed, and was diagnosed with fibromyalgia. One of their friends urged her to try a particular nutritional supplement. Dr. Strand didn't believe it would help, but he told her it couldn't be any worse than what the doctors had done for her. He then watched in amazement over the next few months as her health was restored.

His wife's recovery convinced Dr. Strand to begin questioning the typical medical approach to nutrition. The predominant emphasis in medicine is to treat disease, and the main emphasis of the training most doctors receive is pharmacological. In fact, according to Strand, less than six percent of graduating physicians have received any formal training in



nutrition. Considering these facts, it is not surprising that they devote most of their time and effort to diagnosing disease processes so they can prescribe drugs.

Billions of dollars are spent researching and producing the latest drugs, medicines intended to control symptoms, not address causes and actually prevent disease. Less than one percent of healthcare dollars are spent on what might be called preventative medicine.

According to Dr. Strand, one thing many people think they know about nutrition is actually false. They believe that the U.S. government's Recommended Daily Allowances (RDAs) provide optimum nutrition for good health. In reality, the RDAs

are actually minimum allowances needed to prevent acute deficiency symptoms of diseases such as scurvy and rickets. They provide enough nutrients to stop acute deficiency, but not optimum levels needed for good health.

These revelations did not cause Dr. Strand to despair, however. He simply studied harder and longer. The more he learned, the more he began to understand the amazing complexity of the human body. He says he came to a deeper appreciation of Psalm 139, crying out with the psalmist, “I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are Your works; my soul knows it very well.”

In his quest to understand nutrition, Strand examined more than 1300 peer-reviewed medical studies involving nutritional supplements and how they affect the chronic degenerative diseases that have become epidemic in the recent years. These diseases include coronary artery problems, cancer, stroke, diabetes, macular degeneration, cataracts, Alzheimer's, dementia, Parkinson's disease, multiple sclerosis, and rheumatoid arthritis.

Strand learned that the strongest defense against these diseases is our body's own natural antioxidant and immune systems, but he also became convinced that we cannot get the nutrients we need through food alone. The overwhelming majority of the studies showed a significant health benefit to those patients taking nutrients at optimal levels.

What Your Doctor Doesn't Know About Nutritional Medicine May Be Killing You is the culmination of Strand's quest to understand nutri-

tion. Not only has he examined thousands of studies, but he has also successfully treated hundreds of patients with nutritional supplements. Strand packed his book full of testimonies and documented cases of recovery. There are even a couple of stories of recovery from multiple sclerosis that caused Strand to admit he isn't sure whether they were the result of nutrition or the miraculous intervention of God.

The most important conviction Strand presents is that, "Oxidative stress is the underlying cause of almost all chronic diseases." There are many researchers, doctors, and nutritionists who have been writing about oxidative stress for years, but he explains this cutting edge theory very clearly so that the average person can understand it and begin taking nutritional supplements to do something about it.

Dr. Strand explains that every chronic disease is the result of bad nutrition on the cellular level. As each cell processes energy, free radical electrons are released that can do damage to the cell and cause inflammation in the surrounding tissue. Each chapter explains how oxidative stress in the cells is at the root of a particular chronic degenerative condition or disease. Also included are recommendations of which antioxidants, vitamins, minerals, and nutrients are best for each condition.

The chapters on heart disease, diabetes, arthritis, and autoimmune diseases are particularly well done. Strand explains that cholesterol is not the root cause of heart problems, but the research on homo-

cysteine as a cause is promising. He documents how the homocysteine theory was published in the 1960s by Harvard researcher, Kilmer McCully, but then suppressed by certain leaders in the medical community because drug companies were in a position to make billions off the cholesterol theory. McCully has only recently achieved vindication in the

“Oxidative stress is the underlying cause of almost all chronic diseases.”

medical community, including being recognized by peers at Harvard and MIT who once scoffed at him, and having two very successful books published. McCully and Strand both explain how homocysteine problems and heart disease can be prevented and treated by simple supplements that cost only pennies a day.

Strand also explains that the diabetes epidemic is really an insulin resistance epidemic caused by high glycemic foods in the modern Western diet that is laden with processed foods. He explains how to recognize whether a person is developing diabetes by doing a simple calculation using information from routine blood tests. To help treat the problem he recommends taking specific antioxidants which reduce insulin resistance.

When it comes to autoimmune diseases, Strand claims to have helped several MS patients go from being wheel-chair bound to walking. There are also specific supplements that can help with arthritis by reducing inflammation of the joints.

Some may even help the body rebuild cartilage. He also includes recommendations for Alzheimer's and Parkinson's disease patients and chapters on cardiomyopathy, cancer, cataracts, chronic fatigue, asthma, and lung disease.

Dr. Strand concludes his book with charts that give general nutritional supplementation recommendations for all people and then some "optimizers" for people struggling with particular conditions that are precursors to chronic disease. Surprisingly, Strand does not endorse any particular brand of nutritional supplements or offer his own.

He gives some basic recommendations about how to find high quality supplements. Last of all, he appeals to the medical community to take a more serious look at nutrition as "complementary medicine, not alternative medicine." ♦

What Your Doctor Doesn't Know About Nutritional Medicine May Be Killing You (256 pages) is available from raystrand.com.

This review was first published in the September 2004 newsletter.

The information in this article is for educational purposes and is not meant as medical advice.

Don't be a Scrooge this Christmas

by R.C. Sproul

Bah! Humbug!” These two words are instantly associated with Charles Dickens’ immortal fictional anti-hero, Ebenezer Scrooge. Scrooge was the prototype of the Grinch who stole Christmas, the paradigm of all men cynical.

We all recognize that Ebenezer Scrooge was a mean person—stingy, insensitive, selfish, and unkind. What we often miss in our understanding of his character is that he was pre-eminently profane. “Bah! Humbug!” was his Victorian use of profanity.

Not that any modern editor would feel the need to delete Scrooge’s expletives. His language is not the standard currency of cursing. But it was profane in that Scrooge demeaned what was holy. He trampled on the sanctity of Christmas. He despised the sacred. He was cynical toward the sublime.

Christmas is a holiday, indeed the world’s most joyous holiday. It is called a “holiday” because the day is holy. It is a day when businesses close, when families gather, when churches are filled, and when soldiers put down their guns for a 24-hour truce. It is a day that differs from every other day.

Every generation has its abundance of Scrooges. The Church is full of them. We hear endless complaints of commercialism. We are constantly told to put Christ back into Christmas. We hear that the tradition of Santa Claus is a sacrilege. We listen to those acquainted with history murmur that Christmas isn’t Biblical. The Church invented

Christmas to compete with the ancient Roman festival honoring the bull-god Mithras, the nay-sayers complain. Christmas? A mere capitulation to paganism.

And so we rain on Jesus’ parade and assume an Olympian detachment from the joyous holiday. All this carping is but a modern dose of Scroogeism, our own sanctimonious profanation of the holy.

Sure, Christmas is a time of commerce. The department stores are decorated to the hilt, the ad pages

When God touches earth, the place is holy. When God appears in history, the time is holy.

of the newspapers swell in size, and we tick off the number of shopping days left until Christmas. But why all the commerce? The high degree of commerce at Christmas is driven by one thing: the buying of gifts for others. To present our friends and families with gifts is not an ugly, ignoble vice. It incarnates the amorphous “spirit of Christmas.” The tradition rests ultimately on the Supreme Gift God has given the world. God so loved the world, the Bible says, that He gave His only begotten Son. The giving of gifts is a marvelous response to the receiving of such a Gift. For one day a

year at least, we taste the sweetness inherent in the truth that it is more blessed to give than to receive.

What about putting Christ back into Christmas? It is simply not necessary.¹ Christ has never left Christmas. “Jingle Bells” will never replace “Silent Night.” Our holiday once known as Thanksgiving is rapidly becoming known simply as “Turkey Day.” But Christmas is still called Christmas. It is not called “Gift Day.” Christ is still in Christmas, and for one brief season the secular world broadcasts the message of Christ over every radio station and television channel in the land. Never does the Church get as much free air time as during the Christmas season.

Not only music but the visual arts are present in abundance, bearing testimony to the historic significance of the birth of Jesus. Christmas displays all remind the world of the sacred Incarnation.

Doesn’t Santa Claus paganize or at least trivialize Christmas? He’s a myth, and his very mythology casts a shadow over the sober historical reality of Jesus. Not at all. Myths are not necessarily bad or harmful. Every society creates myths. They are a peculiar art form invented usually to convey a message that is deemed important by the people. When a myth is passed off as real history, that is fraud. But when it serves a different purpose it can be healthy and virtuous. Kris Kringle is a mythical hero, not a villain. He is pure fiction—but a fiction used to illustrate a glorious truth.

What about the historical origins

of Christmas as a substitute for a pagan festival? I can only say, good for the early Christians who had the wisdom to flee from Mithras and direct their zeal to the celebration of the birth of Christ. Who associates Christmas today with Mithras? No one calls it “Mithrasmas.”²

We celebrate Christmas because we cannot eradicate from our consciousness our profound awareness of the difference between the sacred and the profane. Man, in the generic sense, has an incurable propensity for marking sacred space and sacred time. When God appeared to Moses in the burning bush, the ground that was previously common suddenly became uncommon. It was now holy ground—sacred space. When Jacob awoke from his midnight vision of the presence of God, he anointed with oil the rock upon which he had rested his head. It was sacred space.

When God touches earth, the place is holy. When God appears in history, the time is holy. There was never a more holy place than the city of Bethlehem, where the Word became flesh. There was never a more holy time than Christmas morning when Emmanuel was born. Christmas is a holiday. It is the holiest of holy days. ♦

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Footnotes

1. What does the X in Xmas mean? R.C. Sproul. <www.ligonier.org/blog/why-is-x-used-when-it-replaces-christ-in-christmas>
2. Is Christmas a Pagan holiday? R.C. Sproul. <<http://www.ligonier.org/blog/celebration-christmas-pagan-ritual>>



Samaritan member Darren Doane wrote and directed the movie, and he played the character Christian, pictured here.

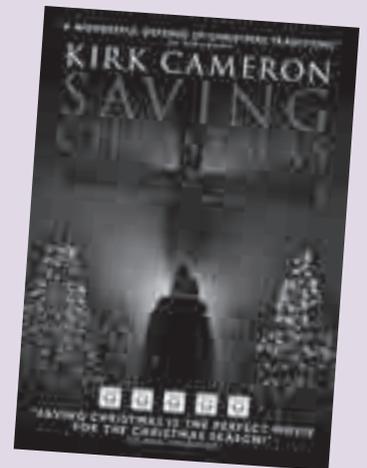
Five Doves for *Saving Christmas*, directed by member Darren Doane

Saving Christmas is the perfect movie for the Christmas season! If you know any old Scrooges or someone who has “Bah, humbug!” on their lips, they need to see this movie. But it is just as much for those who love to celebrate Christmas because it affirms the faith and joy that people demonstrate during the holiday season.

The movie opens with Kirk Cameron sitting next to a decorated Christmas tree and a fire, drinking hot chocolate and stating, “I love Christmas!” He begins by saying that some people want Christmas toned down, while others think that a Christmas tree and Santa and buying presents takes away from the holiday. He argues, convincingly so, that they all add to the celebration.

His brother-in-law in the film, Christian, is a killjoy Christian. Christian doesn’t share the love for Christmas like his wife, Kirk’s sister, does. Kirk has a heart-to-heart talk with Christian and points out things such as the Biblical reason for a tree, and that sharing gifts and celebrating are indeed the right things to do. He looks at the swaddling clothes of Jesus as seen in various nativity scenes. He also offers a history of St. Nicholas, who is the inspiration for our Santa Claus. St. Nicholas stood firm for the faith by standing up to a heretic and giving gifts to the poor. The movie concludes with a joyous celebration with Kirk, Christian, and their families and friends.

This is the perfect movie to watch to get fired up for Christmas and to look past busy stores, hectic days, and spending more money than usual. Christmas is a time to celebrate and that’s what Kirk and his family do—they feast and laugh and celebrate. We are presenting five Doves to *Saving Christmas*. Kirk Cameron has produced another winner! ♦



SavingChristmas.com
Watch instantly at Amazon.com

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Member Letters

We are first of all thankful that Samaritan even exists. As full-time missionaries supported completely by giving, we believe the Lord has provided for us again through Samaritan.

We have been encouraged every time we call, by the staff praying for us. The letters from the members have been our greatest encouragement as I face cancer. We plastered our basement wall with more than a hundred of them, and we go there to be reminded of the prayers being offered to our Father on our behalf.

*Robert and Marilyn Smith
Colorado Springs, Colorado*

I feel so blessed that God brought Samaritan Ministries into our lives. After my husband died, I was paying \$600 per month for insurance for my son and me.

One day I received an email from Samaritan. I feel as if God knew I needed this ministry and made sure to get it to me. After reading all about the ministry, I had to join.

What a blessing it has been to share in helping other believers, and then have other believers help us when my son broke his ankle.

The notes of love and encouragement we received were truly a blessing. I tell everyone I know about Samaritan Ministries.

*Janet Rodriguez
Las Vegas, Nevada*

When I faced an expensive dental bill, I was overcome with worry and anxiety. How would I afford this? I cried and prayed and called Samaritan just in case there was some assistance.

Tears of relief and joy poured

down my cheeks when I was told my bills could be a Special Prayer Need—something we had contributed to monthly. I prayed and thanked God for His blessings.

Then the cards, well wishes, and checks started to arrive. I felt the love of God surround me, knowing that these strangers were my brothers and sisters in Christ, caring for me and my family. It was overwhelming.

This ministry is divinely inspired. Thank you so much!

*Michelle Aller
Oakland, California*

As new members, we wondered just how this ministry could meet the financial needs of enormous medical bills. The next thing we knew, we were the ones with that need!

We were blown away by the entire process. We did all we could do to obtain discounts on our bills. Some were discounted 50 percent, and I was surprised at how easy it was to get that.

When our need was published, we did indeed receive many checks in the mail, along with cards and notes expressing prayers and Bible verses. It was so awesome to see God's hand with each envelope we received.

Now I look forward to mailing our share to a person with a need. I never felt that kind of joy before when I was sending a premium to an insurance company!

*Larry and Karen Busby
Show Low, Arizona*

We are new to the Samaritan family and cannot even put into words what this ministry has already meant to our family. The financial burden was for sure lifted, but the notes of encouragement meant more to us than we expected. Rarely do we see

the Body of Christ in real action, but Samaritan has allowed us a glimpse. We have shared our experience with other families and will continue to do so!

*Matt and Ashley Tyndale
Dallas, Texas*

Your ministry has been such a tremendous blessing to my family during this pregnancy. The need sharing process has been easy. Receiving sweet notes and prayers from all across the country along with other members' shares has been such an



encouragement to me as I prepare to bring a baby into the world.

All the notes and cards are going in our new daughter's baby book, because Samaritan has been such a huge positive part of my pregnancy. I want her to see that even before she was born, fellow brothers and sisters in Christ were praying for her well being. Thank you so much for all you are doing.

*Megan Winningham
Rainbow City, Alabama*

It is such a joyous thing to be able to witness how the Body of Christ works! Unbelievers we know are always amazed when we talk about Samaritan, and they end up being speechless when we tell them we mail a check each month to a stranger. And then we also share how we received the shares when our need was published. This ministry must please God as we love each other and shine brightly in the midst of a very dark industry.

*Dawn Buchbinder,
Grass Lake, Michigan*



We love Samaritan. It has been such an encouragement while I have been recovering from back surgery. I printed out a map of the USA to mark the shares I received, and for the past few months I have someone from almost every state praying for me. I know God answers prayers. He loves us.

It is a blessing to know financial burdens are being lifted by the Body of Christ coming together. This ministry is a blessing in so many ways.

*John and Charlene Gravely
Ellijay, Georgia*

I cannot say enough about what a blessing it has been to be a part of Samaritan Ministries. Whenever we had to deal with our insurance company before joining Samaritan, I would nearly be in tears by the time I got off the phone.

The service was usually terrible, and there was always so much hassle they would put me through before anything could get done. Then they usually still got it wrong!

I've had Samaritan staff pray for me on the phone, and they are always so kind! We really appreciated the love, prayers, notes, and financial support of the other members during our time of need. Thank you, thank you!

*Amber Carpenter
Peru, Indiana*

Our family is truly encouraged by this ministry, and we have been compelled to give more. We desire to help those with Special Prayer Needs because the Lord has been so good to us.

*Jonathan and Kathleen
Blankenship
Charlotte, North Carolina*

Praise the Lord that my son Lane was finally released from orthopedic care for his broken forearm. An X-ray showed the bone had finally filled in enough for him to be discharged after seven months of orthopedic treatment and oversight! It was a direct answer to prayer.

The notes of encouragement and knowing others were praying meant more than the checks—even though the shares are vital, too. I have peace of mind knowing Samaritan is there to glorify God, not increase the profits. It's so refreshing.

Samaritan is truly an extension of Christ's Body, and has become a vital part of helping me fulfill my

responsibility to train up my family in Christian principles. Thank you so much!

*Tiffany Vrell
LaGrange, Indiana*

Praise the Lord for Samaritan Ministries and for all the people who encouraged us with their notes, prayers, quotations from Scripture, and even drawings and stickers.

Our daughter Julie had a long seizure that caused her not to breathe well and her blood became acidic. She had to be sedated for five days while tests were run. During this scary time we felt pressured by the hospital to apply for Medicaid, but Samaritan staff encouraged me to trust the Lord and His people to provide. And they did!

As we receive the shares, our three kids sit around the table keeping track of which state has the most Samaritan members praying for Julia. I cry every night reading the prayers and verses that you all wrote to us! Samaritan is so much better than insurance! We have felt God's hands holding us up with our brothers and sisters coming around us.

We are so blessed. Julie is doing perfectly well. She has been seizure-free for three months and will be weaned off the medication.

I feel that this experience has been very formative in all of our lives, but I especially pray my children will remember this example of God providing for His children, and that it will cause them to trust in Him more.

May God bless you all richly with peace and mercy.

*Felix and Keri Fernandez
Miami, Florida*

The true “true meaning of Christmas”

Continued from page 1

gives us the true “true meaning of Christmas,” when the famous Peanuts character Linus recites the glorious Nativity passage from the Gospel of Luke.

It’s not heavy-handed, it’s not an altar call, and it’s not sentimental or sappy in the least. It’s just a straightforward sharing of the gospel, as a direct response to the emptiness, frustration, and despair that are all that commercialism can provide.

It demonstrates what truly brings hope to the hopeless, not just at this time of year, but all year round. And it’s a beautiful example of the power of Christ to infiltrate and transform culture.

This Christmas, I have an idea for you and your family. Why not pop some popcorn or make some cookies, and invite the neighbors over for a viewing?

What better way to begin to share Christ with those around you than to share a nostalgic, enjoyable, no-pressure experience? And if the viewing opens the door to serious conversations about Christmas and its true meaning, that’s even better.

But no matter what, your friends and neighbors will have learned the true meaning of Christmas—an all-too-rare experience during the Christmas season these days. And that’s a real reason to celebrate. ♦

A Charlie Brown Christmas is available on DVD from many retailers and online from Amazon.com and Netflix.com

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Chuck Colson, who founded Prison Fellowship and Breakpoint, passed away in 2012.

Paul and Jenny Speed

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Paul wanted to run and hide. But a couple, tears streaming down their faces, called out, “Paul and Jenny, please stop.” The man confessed he was in bondage and asked for help. For the next three days, people lined the hallway to talk with Paul and Jenny. Four chairs were placed in the hall so they could minister, one couple at a time.

Once home, Paul and Jenny hosted entire families overnight as they ministered to hurting couples. Finally the demand to counsel, cook, and babysit grew too hard on their own family.

Paul and Jenny officially launched Whatever It Takes Ministries in 2006 to “help couples and individuals do ‘whatever it takes’ to resolve conflicts in their lives and marriages.” At their first Whatever It Takes marriage intensive, they expected twenty couples. Eighty-six signed up. Several of the couples who attended that first intensive still serve as team leaders for their ministry.

Through the years, Paul and Jenny have identified two essentials to walk free in Christ. “First, you must have a desire for freedom. Desire is a must. But you must also believe that you can be free,” Jenny says. “If people desire freedom, even if they don’t know they can be free, we know we can prove to them that Jesus Christ can set them free. There’s no doubt about it.

“Couples in crisis come to us from all kinds of denominations, from conservative Mennonite to Catholic or charismatic, but they meet Jesus in a new, fresh way. It’s amazing to see what happens when they get all this trash out for the Lord to deal with. We’ve seen miracles happen because of these weekends.”

In addition to their weekend intensives, Paul and Jenny speak at churches, conferences, and special events. They’ve ministered throughout the United States as well as in Canada, Mexico, Australia, New Zealand, Singapore, and Malaysia. Paul has begun to blog and intends to start a podcast this coming year. Their first book, which tells their story and gives the steps to freedom, is planned to come out in the spring.

When asked to sum up WIT Ministries, Jenny challenges those in bondage: “Are you willing to do whatever it takes to pursue God with all your heart? Are you willing to do whatever it takes to restore the broken relationships in your life?” The questions must be in that order, she insists, and kept that way no matter what the cost. “God first, then others, in all we do, and all that happens in our ministry.”

And Paul continues, “There is hope. There is freedom. The freedom that Christ came to give us is possible to live in. We don’t want anyone to miss the point that freedom is attainable. You don’t have to be miserable. You don’t have to live in bondage. But you do have to get help. That’s what WIT Ministries is all about.” ♦

WIT Ministries weekend intensives and conferences

WIT Ministries is the overall name given to the four types of weekend intensives and conferences Paul and Jenny Speed hold throughout the year. These events help people desperate to do “whatever it takes” to walk open, broken, and free. Paul and Jenny host several WIT Ministries intensives and one young adult conference each year.

A summer conference, WIT Alive, is for singles at least seventeen years of age. Approximately 250 attend. Paul and Jenny help young adults enter adulthood without the baggage of unresolved wounds, especially taking those scars into marriage.



Adults, whether single, divorced, widowed, or married, attend 4 Days 2 Hope for women or 4 Days 2 Freedom for men. These intensives are structured for six to ten people and occur several times each year.

During 4 Days 2 Hope, women work through unresolved issues from the past by carrying each

pain to the Lord. “You cannot deal with the pain of the present if you’ve never dealt with the pain of the past,” Jenny tells the women. Her goal is to take women who come as victims and send them home as victors.

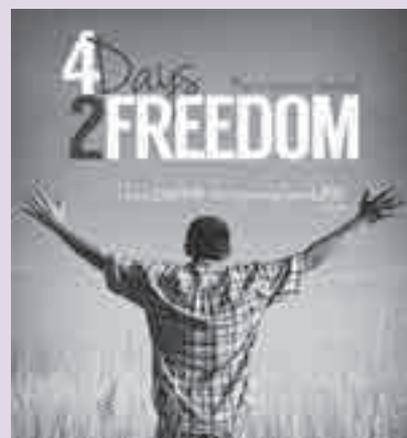
One woman arrived at a 4 Days 2 Hope intensive wearing four wristwatches. She had been sexually abused by her father since she was four years old. Her mother had known, and warned her to keep quiet. The wristwatches covered the scars from cutting herself repeatedly. That weekend she learned to be open, to forgive her parents, and to set boundaries. Since then, she is no longer cutting herself or taking medication for depression.

At 4 Days 2 Freedom, Paul helps men do “whatever it takes” to find deliverance from bondages, addictions, and hidden sin. One man was destroying his family with anger, another was addicted to cocaine, and yet another came to restore his marriage from years of adultery. “But,” Paul says, “what they all have in common is sin and pain. They are all in crisis.”

Their marriage intensive does not “tell you what to do,” but emphasizes gaining clear hearts and minds so couples hear what God wants them to do. The format is simple. Paul and Jenny speak, then team leaders facilitate discussion around a table using the workbooks given to each participant. Team leaders also counsel one-on-one to ensure

everyone returns home with a written plan of action. Weekly phone counseling is available as a follow-up.

Whether overeating or anger, alcohol or adultery, Paul and Jenny want to get to the spiritual root causing the outward action. Couples come believing their conflict is over handling finances



or raising children, but leave knowing it was actually an inner cause like selfishness or pride. When couples leave open and broken, “their chances of success skyrockets.”

At one marriage intensive, all five couples were already separated. Two of the couples had to go to court to get restraining orders lifted so they could attend together. “Now all those couples have been restored—to God be the glory.”

“God has made a ministry of our failures, not having it all together, and uses it for His glory to set other people free.” ♦

Prayer for the Persecuted Church

Hebrews 13:3 tells us to “Remember those who are in prison, as though in prison with them, and those who are mistreated, since you also are in the body.” Our brothers and sisters in Christ around the world are being persecuted for the sake of the Gospel. We need to remember them in prayer. Each month, the Christian Health Care Newsletter will provide updates gleaned from such sources as World Watch Monitor and The Voice of the Martyrs and offer prayer points. Please use them in your personal or group prayer time.

Laotian leader dies

A Laotian Christian leader died in September of complications from diabetes that worsened while he was in prison, Voice of the Martyrs reports. Mr. Tiang was put in prison in June 2014, along with four others, for “treating (a person) without an official license causing her to die.” He spent nine months in prison with no medical treatment for his diabetes. After his release in March 2015, he was taken to a hospital, where he later died. *Pray for his wife, Bow, and their six children as they and other Laotian Christians face continued pressure from the government.*

Ex-husband threatens family

A Pakistani Christian woman and her daughters are reportedly being threatened by the woman’s ex-husband, who is angry about their conversion to Christianity, VOM says. Since her remarriage, “Zuny” and her family have had to move several times after receiving death threats.

Pray that Zuny’s family will be safe, and that her ex-husband will turn to Jesus and stop threatening them.

7 Tanzanian churches burned

Seven churches in northwestern Tanzania were burned within a week in late September, VOM reports. One of the churches, Living Water International Church, was attacked for the third time in two years. *Pray for rebuilding efforts, persistence in worshipping God, and persistence in faith for Christian Tanzanians.*

Christians forbidden to marry

Two Christians in Tunis are being forbidden to marry by the government, VOM says. “Yasmina,” the young woman, became a Christian four years ago. “Ali,” a non-Tunisian Christian man, is not allowed to marry her because he will not declare himself to be a Muslim; Tunis requires foreign men to declare the Islamic faith before they can marry Tunisian women. Ali refuses to deny his faith. *Pray that the couple will find a way to be married without having to deny their faith in Christ.*

Muslims want churches razed

Hard-line Muslims in Indonesia are demanding that the Aceh provincial government close 10 Christian churches, International Christian Concern reports. The demand was made days after a church was burned down, killing one person and injuring several others. The Muslims want the churches closed down because some of them lack proper permits, although they have been applied for. *Pray that the authorities will treat Christians wishing to build churches fairly, and that the current church buildings will be*

allowed to remain standing. Pray also for the safety of Christians in Aceh.

Muslim mob beats family

A Muslim mob beat a Christian family after discovering the father was collecting water from a mosque tap in Pakistan, ICC reports. The mosque’s tap reportedly is the town’s only source of clean water. Local Muslims confronted the Christian man, Aftab Gill, who has five children, and told him he could only collect water if he converted to Islam. Aftab and his sons refused, and the mob beat them and forced them to leave the village. *Pray for physical and spiritual healing of Aftab and his family, that the Gill family will be able to find a safe new village, and for equal access to clean drinking water.*

Hindu mob attacks Christians

Four Indian Christians attacked by a Hindu mob in October suffered acute injuries, VOM reports. A group of Christians was worshipping with a local house church as Hindu celebrations were going on outside. A mob formed outside the home and started to beat the Christians. One of the women was raped and cut with a knife. A man suffered a broken knee and another had six ribs and his back broken. *Pray for full emotional, spiritual, and physical recovery for all of the victims and against the spiritual darkness blinding the Hindus in their village. ♦*

For more information on the persecuted church, contact The Voice of the Martyrs (www.persecution.com, 877-337-0302), International Christian Concern (www.persecution.org, 800-422-5441) or World Watch Monitor (worldwatchmonitor.org).

famine.

Fast forward another two millennia, and we find ourselves living in a situation not unlike the time Jesus entered. Once again there is a famine in the land, and once again the famine is not physical, but spiritual and moral. Many of our religious and political elite are no doubt corrupt enough to warrant John the Baptist's "brood of vipers" treatment. Is there a famine of righteousness? Well, there's Obergefell vs. Hodges. Is there a famine of morality? Well, Planned Parenthood lives on. Is there a famine of wisdom? Well, the cost of maintaining the welfare/warfare state is edging the U.S. government debt closer to the \$20 trillion mark.

Why the famine? Many reasons could be given, but here are two of the overarching ones: On the one hand, we are continually seeking political, social, and cultural solutions without Christ. Some of the solutions may well be reasonable propositions. Yet without prior political, social, and cultural repentance, they will not succeed.

On the other hand, there are Christians who don't seek to engage in political, social, and cultural solutions, because they apparently believe Jesus is not much interested in politics, society, and culture. Since His Kingdom is "not of this world," we shouldn't attempt to bring Jesus into the public square.

The first approach tries to build a civilization without Jesus. We still pay lip service to God—In God we Trust—but we try to solve everything ourselves. The second doesn't attempt to build a civilization in the belief that God doesn't have a great deal of interest in it.

I think both approaches are refuted

by the Incarnation of Jesus—the coming of the Bread of Life into the House of Bread. The spiritual and moral famine in the land in Jesus' day could not be filled by political, social, and cultural endeavors alone, but only by the coming of the Son of God into the world. Likewise, the spiritual and moral famine in our day can only be filled by Jesus. We might see some minor political, social, and cultural successes by our own endeavors, but real change—the ushering in of righteousness, morality, and wisdom—will only come when we repent and trust in Yahweh to guide us—to guide our politics, our society, and our culture.

The fact that Emmanuel—God with us—entered His own creation and proclaimed that "the Kingdom of Heaven was at hand" shows that though His Kingdom is not of this world—that is, it doesn't emanate from here and isn't built on the same principles as worldly kingdoms—His intention was to bring His Kingdom into this world. Why else would He teach us to pray, "Thy will be done on Earth as it is in Heaven"? We are to pray and work for all things—including the political, social, and cultural—to be brought under His rule on Earth.

God's Son—the Bread of Life—was born into the House of Bread at a time when the world was famished—famished for righteousness, famished for morality, and famished for wisdom. We, too, are in midst of a spiritual and moral famine, caused in part by our seeking for solutions without recourse to God, or by our insisting that God isn't much interested in rebuilding our collapsing civilization.

As we celebrate the Incarnation

of the Son of God later this month, let us therefore remember Him in all His fullness, trusting that He is not just Lord over individuals and the Church, but also politics, society, culture and ... well, everything, and that just as He had the power to turn the world upside down 2,000 years ago, He has the power to turn it right side up today:

"For a Child will be born to us, a Son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His Name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, on the throne of David and over His kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness from then on and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of Hosts will accomplish this." (Isaiah 9:6-7) ♦

*Rob Slane lives with his wife and six home-educated children in Salisbury, England. He is the author of *The God Reality: A Critique of Richard Dawkins' The God Delusion*, contributes to the Canadian magazine *Reformed Perspective* and blogs on cultural issues from a Biblical perspective at www.theblogmire.com.*

We destroy arguments
and every lofty opinion
raised against the knowl-
edge of God, and take
every thought captive
to obey Christ.

II Corinthians 10:5

As believers in Jesus Christ, we are involved in a war, but it is not a war fought with physical weapons. This war is raging in the culture around us, both at home and abroad. It is even raging within the Church. It is a spiritual war that can only be fought with spiritual weapons that have divine power to destroy strongholds.

To be obedient to Christ, we must each boldly do our part to engage in this battle, trusting in

our Lord for wisdom to confront the arguments and opinions we face that are raised against the knowledge of God. Every one.

We must not try to avoid this conflict and shrink back in fear. We will not be put to shame, if we trust in and obey Him.

For the Kingdom,



Ray King