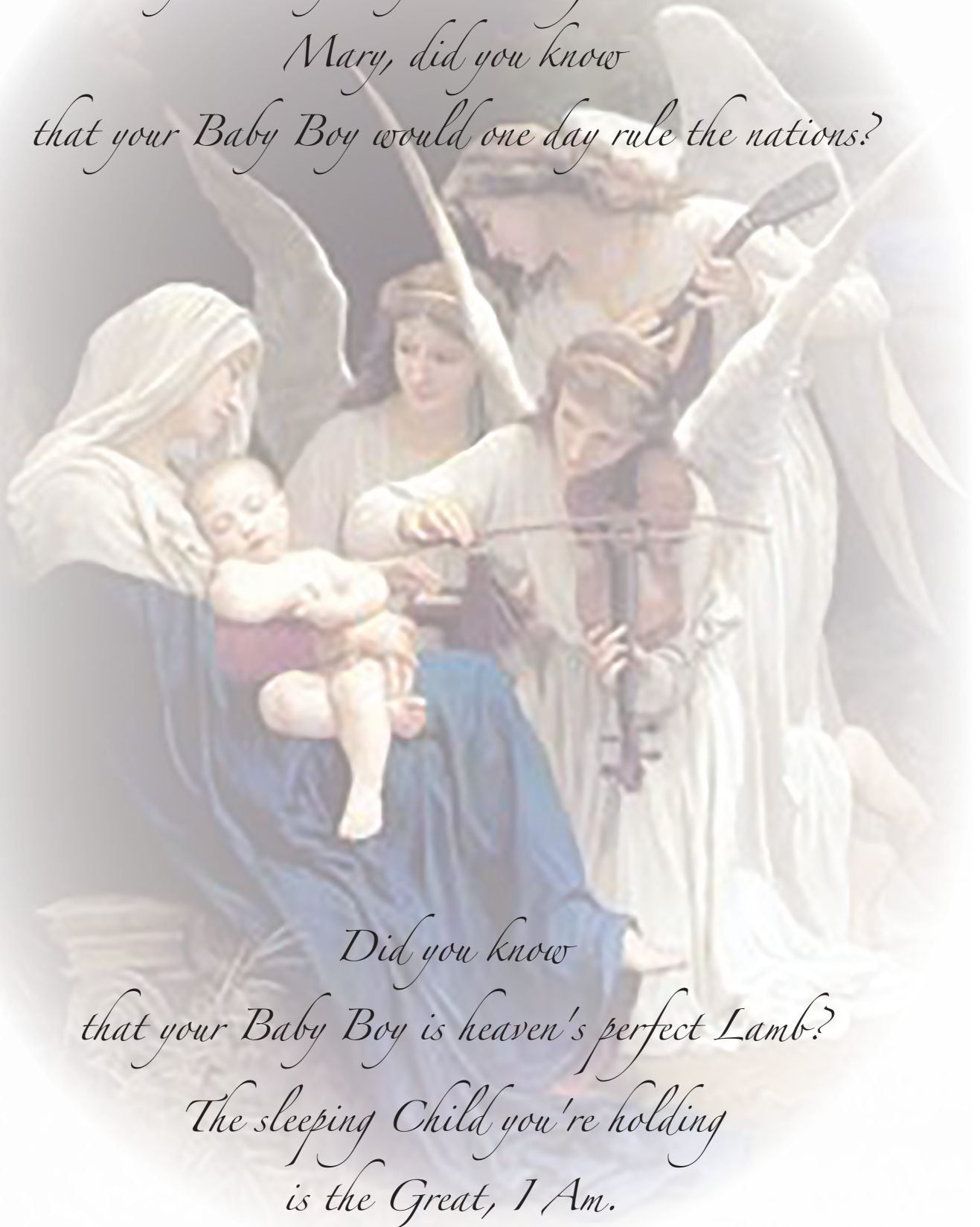


YOU HAVE NOT SEEN CHRIST,
BUT STILL YOU LOVE HIM.
YOU CANNOT SEE HIM NOW,
BUT YOU BELIEVE IN HIM.
SO YOU ARE FILLED WITH A JOY
THAT CANNOT BE EXPLAINED,
A JOY FULL OF GLORY.

H A L L E L L U J A H!

*Mary, did you know
that your Baby Boy is Lord of all creation?
Mary, did you know
that your Baby Boy would one day rule the nations?*



*Did you know
that your Baby Boy is heaven's perfect Lamb?
The sleeping Child you're holding
is the Great, I Am.*

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If you've never read *The Sabbath Recorder* before, you might be wondering who Seventh Day Baptists are.

Like other Baptists, we believe in:

- salvation by grace through faith in Christ Jesus.
- the Bible as the inspired word of God. The Bible is our authority for our faith and daily conduct.
- baptism of believers, by immersion, witnessing to our acceptance of Christ as Savior and Lord.
- freedom of thought under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.
- the congregational form of church government. Every church member has the right to participate in the decision-making process of the church.

The Seventh Day

God commanded that the seventh day (Saturday) be kept holy. Jesus agreed by keeping it as a day of worship. We observe the seventh day of the week (Saturday) as God's Holy Day as an act of loving obedience – not as a means of salvation. Salvation is the free gift of God through Jesus our Lord. It is the joy of the Sabbath that makes SDBs a people with a difference.

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Have you ever gotten caught with your hand in the cookie jar? I almost did and, while trying to hide, I wound up taking a long ride in a sack of grain. In the end I met the most amazing human, a baby who would forever change the world.

My day started like any other with a slice of mom's barley bread for breakfast. Mom always mixed in just the right amount of honey, making hers the best barley bread in all of Galilee. Like any other young mouse, I would have liked to have slept in late...but not if it meant missing out on a slice of barley bread.

"Zacharias," my mom called as I finished my last bite, "your father and I will be busy today gathering the supplies we will need while the humans are in Bethlehem."

"I still don't understand why they are leaving. I'll miss watching Mr. Joseph working in his shop."

"I know. We will all miss them while they're gone. But they have to go to Bethlehem by order of the emperor."

Wiping her paws on her red apron, she gave me *the look*...the kind moms give when they want to make sure their children are paying attention. "Make sure you stay out of trouble Zacharias." Mom was the only one who called me by my full name, which was the Greek version of Zechariah. I was named after one of Ms. Mary's relatives whose name meant "God has remembered."

"The people will be busy getting ready for their trip," mom continued. "Please stay out of their way."

"I will."

I put my plate in the sink and headed to my room to get my favorite red cape. My shield, made from a coin which had been dropped by one of Mr. Joseph's customers, was under my bed. The shield and cape make me look like a Roman soldier. Unfortunately, while I had my uniform I did not have my sword. My original sword got broken when I stepped on it by accident. Good thing we live in a carpenter's home. There are always small scraps of wood on the floor so I knew I would have no trouble finding a replacement sword. With sword in hand I would be dressed for battle, ready to defeat the fiercest of dust bunnies.

I made my way out of our nest and into the kitchen that Mr. Joseph was making for Mary. They were just recently married and were still working to set up the house to Mary's liking. From there I had hoped to make my way to the shop but my plans were interrupted by a knock on the door.

"Hello, Mary," said the woman visitor, "I wish I could stay awhile but the animals are loaded and we are ready to start our journey. I just wanted to drop off these Teiglach."



Teiglach! Just hearing the name made my mouth water. You can keep your chocolate chips. No other cookie compared to a fresh warm Teiglach. Teiglach are small balls of dough boiled in honey. Normally we would only eat them during Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year, and they were best eaten before the honey became brittle. It was not the season for Teiglach...but hey, who's complaining!

"I thought," the visitor continued, "these might sweeten your journey. Are you sure you will be okay taking such a long ride?"

"I'll be fine," Mary answered with a slight giggle. "I just hope the baby can wait until after we return. Having a baby on the road would not be much fun."

I missed the rest of their conversation because the smell of warm honey filled the house. I had to have at least one Teiglach before Mary and Joseph left.

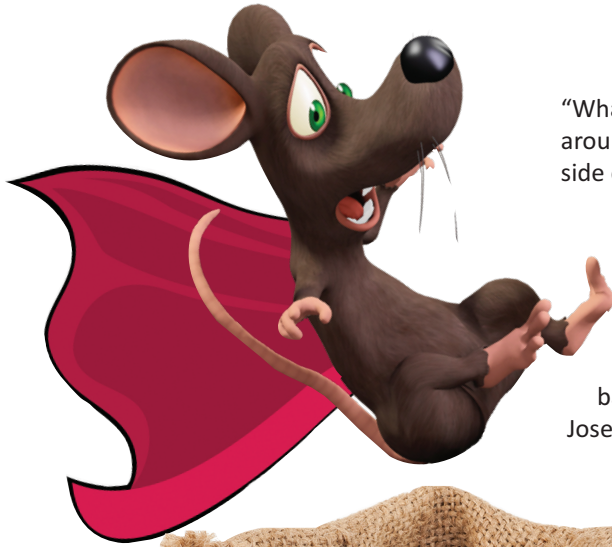
Mary and the woman said their goodbyes and Mary carried the bag of cookies over to the table. Then she returned to the task of packing clothes for the trip. That's when I made my move.

I scurried across the room and over to the table. Joseph had carved decorations into the table's leg making it easy to climb, even with my cape trailing behind. A bag of barley sitting near the table kept me hidden from view on my way up.

Continued on next page...

Zach in the Sack

Continued from previous page...



“What kind of nuts did she coat them with?” I wondered, as I looked around to make sure no one would see me. But before I could climb up the side of the bag of cookies, the door swung open and in walked Mr. Joseph!

I ran back to the edge of the table, hoping he would not see me.

I had only one chance if I were to escape unnoticed — I had to jump. Unfortunately, I forgot about the bag of barley sitting on the floor. It made for a soft landing — but it was also hard to climb back to the top of the bag. Before I could climb out, Mr. Joseph tied the bag shut and loaded it on his donkey. With that, I found myself joining Joseph and Mary on their trip to Bethlehem.

During the long ride, I noticed that Ms. Mary seemed very uncomfortable. She had to stop a number of times for bathroom breaks which made for really slow travel. Mr. Joseph did his best to keep her comfortable, talking with her in order to help her take her mind off of the bumps in the road and the aches that come with being a new mom. He reminded her of her conversation with an angel and how the angel told her she would have a baby.

Gabriel told Mary this baby would be the Son of the Highest. The angel’s words reminded me of stories my parents told me of how all creation was affected by man’s sin. Because people were disobedient and sinned against God, they needed a savior. God promised to give the world that savior, who would come to set people free.

By the time we got to Bethlehem all of the hotel rooms were full. The only space available was in a stable where horses and donkeys normally slept. I was fine with sleeping with the other animals but it was not the best place for people — especially when they were expecting a new baby.

I was able to squeeze out of the bag just in time to find everyone running from place to place grabbing things Mary would need for the baby’s arrival. The manger (a feeding trough for the animals) was emptied and turned into a baby crib. They planned to wrap the baby in swaddling clothes, which I imagined would feel like a big hug. I found myself wishing I were home getting a big hug from my mom. Normally I pretended not to like hugs, but being so far from home, a hug was exactly what I needed.

My thoughts of home were interrupted when the baby took his first breath and let out a good healthy cry. It was then that I

saw Joseph smile as he turned to his wife and said, “It’s a boy.” Mary returned his smile and said, “A boy. Just as the angel said.”

I had never seen an angel but my mom had told me a lot about them. I suspect the angel told Mary and Joseph what they should name the baby. Without pausing for even a moment they both said his name would be Jesus.

The humans set out to make Mary comfortable, preparing a place for her to relax. While they weren’t looking, I was able to sneak up the side of the manger to take a look. There, wrapped comfortably in his swaddling clothes was the baby Jesus. At first glance he looked like any other small person. But something about him did seem different. I could not pinpoint why but something about him gave me a feeling of great peace. I should have been afraid, but near this baby I felt safe. I missed

being at home but somehow, as I looked into His eyes, I felt like everything was as it should be. Mice normally run away from people, but there was something about baby Jesus that made me want to stay there by his side.

A sudden noise drew my attention away from the baby. As I jumped down from on top of the manger, I saw a group of very excited shepherds who introduced themselves to Joseph. "We saw an angel," one of them said. "He told us the Savior had been born."

"He said we would find a baby," added a second shepherd. "We were told we would know this baby because he would be wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger."

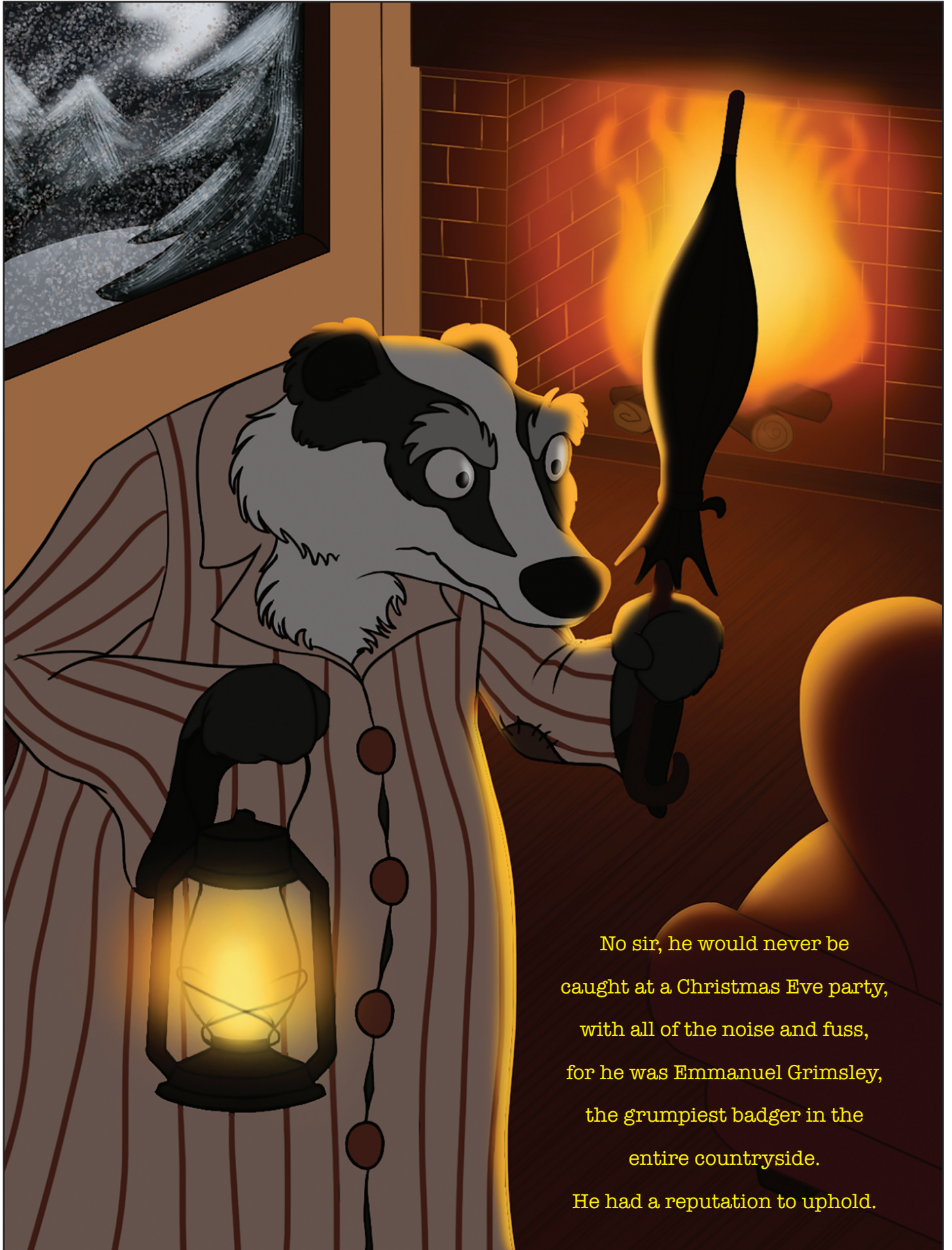
"It was then," continued the first shepherd, "that a large group of angels joined the first. They began to worship God and to thank Him for His plan for the salvation of man. And now we have come to see and to worship."

The men approached the manger and gave thanks to God. It was then that I understood. This baby was no ordinary baby. He was sent to save men and women from their sins. Anyone who believes in Him is forgiven by God and given the power to become His child. From that day forward many received this gift of salvation.

Have you accepted the gift of forgiveness from God? SR

This baby was no ordinary baby.





No sir, he would never be caught at a Christmas Eve party, with all of the noise and fuss, for he was Emmanuel Grimsley, the grumpiest badger in the entire countryside. He had a reputation to uphold.

It's Christmas Whether You Like it or Not

The badger dozed in his easy chair while a knot of lightwood blazed in the fireplace. Great flurries of snow swept across the countryside. Every once in a while, when an icy current whistled around the windowpanes, he roused from his slumber and peeped through the window at the snow. Sometimes he would hear the jingle of harness bells and snatches of merry laughter as travelers shushed along in pony carts.

Bah, Christmas Eve. Everybody hurrying hither and yon, over hill and dale, off to one party or another. Thinking of merry-making, and nog-guzzling, and hall-decking gave the old badger a stomachache. No sir, he would never be caught at a Christmas Eve party, with all of the noise and fuss, for he was Emmanuel Grimsley, the grumpiest badger in the entire countryside. He had a reputation to uphold.

Just as Mister Grimsley had closed his peepers for a snooze, there came a sharp knock at the door. Good Heavens above, who would come knocking at this time of night? Feeling very put out, he hauled himself up and muttered all the way to the door. Whoever it was had to be the brazenest creature imaginable to come unannounced, a-ratta-tat-tattering upon his door like some kind of crazy woodpecker.

The knock came again.

“Alright, alright,” muttered the badger.

As soon as he turned the knob, a wintry blast flung the door wide open. There on the porch stood a chipmunk grinning up at him.

“Merry Christmas, Mister Grimsley,” said the chipmunk. His little wool jacket and cap were dusted with snow and tiny icicles danced on the ends of his whiskers while he braced against the wind.

“What is it this time, Spunkmeyer,” grumbled the badger. “Alms for the penniless again?” The chipmunk removed his cap reverently and explained, “Well Mister Grimsley, Sir, we’re on our way home after cutting down a Christmas tree and we got caught in the blizzard.”

Mister Grimsley glowered down at the little creature and wanted very much to tell him what a cotton-brained idea it had been to go out on a night like this, but he just grunted in an impatient sort of way instead.

The diffident little chap wished he could hide from the badger’s imposing eyebrows, the way they scrunched into a prickly frown. He began to fidget with his cap and ventured in a quavering voice, “We were hoping to come in from the cold until it lets up out here. The wife and kids have just about frozen into popsicles, Mister Grimsley, and — after all, it’s Christmas Eve.”

The badger looked from Spunkmeyer to the chipmunk family shivering in the pony cart. Then he heaved a great sigh of resignation and said, “Well don’t just stand there lolly-gagging, Spunkmeyer, stable the pony in the barn. There’s food in the pantry and cider in the keg.”

It wasn’t long before the Spunkmeyers settled in. Amelia Spunkmeyer staggered under a load of goodies from the pantry. Horace and Quagmire, the two chipmunk scamps, occupied themselves with a puzzle on the floor. And Mister Grimsley sat with Spunkmeyer by the fire, enduring stories about his work at the Mapleton Creamery. Before long they were interrupted by another knock at the door.

“I’ll get it!” shouted Spunkmeyer as he scampered across the room. He stretched up and turned the knob and a great gust blew open the door.

“Well bless me!” exclaimed a jolly voice. “If it isn’t Hezekiah Spunkmeyer!” A jovial mole named Henry Buttercup grinned broadly on the stoop. Beside him stood his wife Alice who was trying very hard to keep her wig from flying away in the wind.

Mister Grimsley could see who it was from across the room and before he could object, Hezekiah had invited the Buttercups to stay.

Continued on next page...

It's Christmas Whether You Like it or Not

Continued from previous page...



Soon their cart and pony were parked in the barn and a mouthwatering buffet of pumpkin pies, snicker doodles, jugs of eggnog and pots of honey were hauled into the den.

“Well it’s mighty neighborly of you to invite us in like this, Emmanuel,” said Mister Buttercup. The badger thought about saying he had not invited him in at all, but he held his tongue. “We were on our way to the Hollyhocks’ Christmas party,” he continued, “when our pony simply couldn’t trudge another step in the snow. We were going to turn back until we saw your lights on and decided to drop in.”

No sooner had the Buttercups hung up their coats and scarves than there came another knock at the door. Hezekiah opened the door again and cried, “Oh come in, come in. There’s plenty of room.” Before Mister Grimsley could stop them, 20 mice scurried in and assembled themselves in two rows in front of the fireplace. They were a family of mice who lived in a wheat field three miles away and they called themselves “The Wakefield Warblers.” They stopped in every year and he dutifully listened to their carols.

The fat daddy mouse played the accordion and others played tiny trumpets and horns. As the choir piped a lusty rendition of “Silent Night,” Mister Grimsley couldn’t help noticing the irony of the song. His night was anything but silent now that he had a houseful of interlopers to entertain. After the song, the choir disbanded and raided the snack table.

Mr. Grimsley peeked through the window, wondering when the storm would let up. The snow

was becoming so deep that no pony cart would make it more than a hundred yards before getting blown into a drift. Any hope of a quiet evening that lingered in his heart plummeted when he saw Spunkmeyer and Mister Buttercup trudging through the snow carrying a small Christmas tree from the barn.

The front door burst open and the two creatures erected the tree on a makeshift stand in the corner.

“We’re snowed in, everybody,” announced Mister Buttercup. “Stoke up the fire and trim the tree. We are all going to spend Christmas together, friends!”

Hezekiah fixed a small candle to the top of the tree with some bailing wire and soon had a flame flickering beautifully.

Meanwhile, Mister Grimsley stood dumbfounded by the windowsill trying to take in all that was happening. One minute he’d been dozing by the fire all alone and the next minute, twenty-six brazen intruders possessed by the Christmas Spirit had converged upon his home. It was as if Christmas had descended upon him without warning. He took a sip of Alice Buttercup’s eggnog and something in it made his cheeks and the tops of his ears feel very warm. Not bad. And a piece of apple pie covered with a slice of melted cheese reminded him of pleasant nights long ago with his dear departed mother.

As the old badger stood in the midst of the holiday pandemonium that bustled all around, the Christmas Spirit began to whisper to his heart. Very quietly, so that no one would notice, he slipped away to light the fires in his many extra bedrooms and to turn down the beds for his guests. He may have forgotten Christmas, said the voice in his heart, but Christmas had not forgotten him. And if you were very quiet and if you looked very closely, you could see the corners of the badger’s old mouth begin to wrinkle into a very little smile. SR

by Jeremy Evans

Seattle Area SDB Church

Illustration by Jeremy Evans and Lucia B

Put on the Full Armor of God

IF we are to stand against the evil schemes of the devil, we must do so by putting on God's armor. Last month we learned that the armor of God is simply Christ Jesus himself. When we trust Christ with our lives and our eternity, in the spiritual realm He covers us. Galatians 3:27 says, "For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ." That baptism is not the mere act of going under the water but it represents complete trust in Jesus to redeem us.

However, putting on Christ or putting on God's armor is not a passive activity. We must be fully engaged in the process. Romans 13:14 says, "But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires." The same command, using the same exact verb, is found in Ephesians 6:11, "Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil."



The Lord is our strength means that He is our armor.

It may seem like our goal in the Christian life from these verses is simply to stay away from evil. If this is our only focus, then we will be distracted from our ultimate purpose, which is to bring glory to God in everything. We stand firm against the evil one not simply by resisting sin but by becoming like Jesus. To put on God's armor or to put on Christ is to become like Him. As we fix our eyes on Him, "the founder and perfecter of our faith" (Hebrews 12:2, ESV), we become more like Him in truth, in righteousness, in peace, in faith, in the true knowledge of redemption, in the word of God, and in prayer.

We are strong in the Lord as long as the Lord is our strength. The Lord is our strength means that He is our armor. Truth is not a concept. Jesus is truth. Righteousness cannot be defined without Jesus because He is the righteous one. You cannot opt out of becoming more like Jesus if you are a Christian. Either you resist the work of His Spirit in your life, and in so doing you make your life miserable, or you work with the Spirit, putting on Christ, standing firm against the evil one by being like Jesus, and reveal God's glory through every part of your life. All spiritual warfare comes back to the Lord's ultimate goal of bringing us into conformity with the character and the image of Jesus Christ.

"Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. Stand firm therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, with all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints."

— Ephesians 6:10-18

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Put on the Full Armor of God

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FAITH

When Jesus said, *"I came that they may have life and have it abundantly"* (John 10:10), He wasn't talking about the pursuit of happiness. He was talking about God's design for us to live by faith. Romans 1:17 says, *"The righteous will live by faith."* The best way to live is to act in accordance with how our Creator designed us – to live by faith.

In the beginning, Adam and Eve lived with unconditional trust in the Lord. That trust was broken when the seeds of doubt began to take root. They began to question whether or not God had their best interests in mind. Was God keeping something from them? So they disobeyed, and we all found out that they chose the wrong answer.

When we doubt God's character and His love for us, the arrows of the evil one can potentially penetrate our hearts and cause much pain and suffering. These arrows are not the bad things that happen to us. Bad things happen to us because we live in a world marred by the consequences of sin. The arrows are the temptations from Satan to not put our complete trust in God.

When Job suffered the tragic loss of everything he had (all his possessions and children), it says, *"In all this, Job did not sin by charging God with wrongdoing."* (Job 1:22) The evil one had told the Lord that Job would *"curse you to your face"* (Job 1:11). Instead Job placed his trust in the Lord.

When Job's health was taken from him and he was afflicted with painful sores all over his body, still he did not turn away from trusting in the Lord. It says, *"In all this, Job did not sin in what he said."* (Job 2:10) Satan had said to God that if Job's health was taken from him, he would *"surely curse you to your face."* (Job 2:5) Job placed his trust in the Lord.

We, like Job, face the temptation to blame God for not caring about us when we go through difficulties. It is at these times we need faith in order to shield us from the temptation to accuse God of doing wrong by us. James 1:13 says, *"Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him. Let no one say when he is tempted, 'I am being tempted by God,' for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one."*

SALVATION AND GOD'S WORD

The helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit are gifts which are given to everyone who trusts in the Lord. Just like with all gifts, there must be a giver. The Lord gives salvation because it is His to give. He earned it through His life, death and resurrection. By faith we can receive it.

The helmet of salvation must be firmly in place because Satan sows weeds of doubt about our salvation. These weeds include not believing that you are good enough for God and that He would never forgive you. The reason why this is so deceptive is because there is truth wrapped up in this lie. The truth is that no gift we can give God and no sacrifice we can make to God will ever make us good enough for God. Only Jesus' sacrifice will do. Once we settle this truth and cease our worry or our efforts at trying to measure up, then we will become secure and protected in the knowledge of our salvation.

The sword of the Spirit is also a gift which has been given. The emphasis here is not so much growing in our understanding of the Word of God but using it. It is called the sword of the Spirit because we rightly use God's word when the Spirit is directing us. Without the Spirit leading us into all the truth, we can turn God's word into a club to beat people over the head. However, if we properly understand it as His Word under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, it can provide strength to stand firm against the strategy of the evil one.

The Word of God is a sword which cuts down the advance of evil. But it must not simply be on our lips — it must be in our hearts. Psalm 119:11 says, *"I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you."* It is not only memorizing Bible verses which is important — allowing God's word to become a part of the core of our being is part of what it means to become like Him. James 1:21 says, *"Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you."* This is not the salvation kind of saving. It is being saved from the power and influence of the evil one.

PRAYER

Prayer is not a part of the armor. We are not instructed to put on prayer. We are told to pray. To pray is to follow the orders of our commanding officer. Once we have

put on the armor, prayer should characterize our daily activity. Jesus said, *"My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations."* (Mark 11:17) The house He was referring to was not the physical temple but the spiritual temple – His people, those who live by faith in Christ.

The command to pray is accompanied by four "alls." These "alls" are important. The first is "all kinds of prayers and requests." There is nothing in our life that can fall outside of the need to pray. If you have a question about whether or not to pray about something, let this be your answer — "Yes."

The second is "pray at all times in the Spirit." Is there ever a time where we should be out of communication with the Spirit of God? We should always be listening even when we are unable to pray out loud.

The third is "all perseverance and petition." Some things need to stay on our prayer list until the Lord gives us peace to take them off. James 5:17 says, *"Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth."* There are times when what we lack is perseverance, not faith.

The last is "for all the saints." We need to hold all of God's people in our hearts. That doesn't mean that we can pray for everyone all the time, but it does mean that we should be ready to pray for God's people at home and around the world as the occasion arises. For example, we should be praying regularly for Christians who are facing the reality of the Islamic State.

The following report is from the Voice of the Martyrs: *"As the Islamic State (IS) fighter raised his weapon to fire, the Christian he was about to kill made a surprising statement. "I know you will kill me, but I give to you my Bible."*

The fighter — who especially enjoyed killing Christians — squeezed the trigger, and the Christian man fell dead. Then the fighter did something strange: he picked up the Bible.

As he read it, he began having dreams of a man in white who told him, "You are killing my people."

As we pray for strength for others and they pray for us, we are all going to be stronger in the Lord. We don't fight these battles alone. We are in this together. Let us be those who pray at all times for all of God's people.

How can we pray? Let us pray for each other to become more like Jesus: To grow stronger in faith, in righteousness, in the peace of God, in truth, in the Word of the Lord, in being transformed into those who truly reflect the image of Jesus.

UNITY – COMMON UNION

In His prayer on the night before His crucifixion, our Lord made a couple of very important requests of our Heavenly Father. *"I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one."* (John 17:14-15)

Jesus also prayed, *"I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me."* (John 17:20-21) The Lord was asking for unity among his followers, for all who would come after him. This unity is possible because of the unity that exists between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We have a common union not because of our common beliefs, our common abilities, our common temperaments, our common ancestry, or any other thing that belongs to us. We have common unity or communion because we share in Christ together. Because we have been covered by Christ, because we are in Christ who is in the Father, we have the ability to come into perfect unity.

Perfect unity is not perfect uniformity. We will never see unity by attempting to make another person like us. We will see unity as we together fix our eyes on Jesus, helping one another to draw close to Him and to be conformed to His image, His character.

So then let us put aside the need to create each other in our own image and instead celebrate the image of Jesus which God is creating in each one of us. SR

The armor of God is simply Christ Jesus himself.



Top Ten Words

Gimme: Exodus 20:17

Sermon Series by Pastor Dusty Mackintosh, Next Step Christian Church, Thornton, CO

Covet the Gifter, not the Gift Surefire Way to Ruin Christmas

Imagine it is Christmas morning. You have your coffee in hand. You are surrounded by family. The presents are all under the tree. Maybe you take out the gifts one a time. Everyone takes turns, maybe...all at once, it's a frenzy of wrapping paper.

This Christmas I want you to do a little experiment.

While everyone is opening gifts, take out your smartphone. For every gift that is opened, I want you to do a price lookup. You can scan the barcode or search on Amazon. Loudly announce the price, and then keep a running tally for each person for the value of his gifts. Rank everyone in order of how much he ended up with. Then each person on the list gets to make aggressively bitter comments about the person immediately above him. The person at the top just gets to feel super guilty. For bonus points, they can envy the "guilt-free" Christmas of the person at the bottom of the list.

Congratulations, you have absolutely ruined Christmas!

We intuitively know that this is a horrible idea. We know it. And yet...there is within all of us, and maybe just a whisper, and maybe only rears its ugly head at certain moments...but we are playing the comparison game.

The Comparison Game

This comes up especially when you see someone else with something you really want. Your neighbor just had his house painted. It looks really good. You might see the car they are driving: mini-van envy. You see the best face they put to the outside world, but probably not the internal conflicts, the arguments, the disappointments and mistakes. So for starters, you are comparing the sum of all your failures and successes

against just their successes. Even if you had the whole story, there are people you would still envy, coveting their circumstances, their gifts, and their possessions. Here is the truth:

Life is radically unfair.

As far as I can tell it is not a zero sum game where everyone has more of this and less of this and it all balances out. In our creative and diverse world, there are people who struggle to make it to first base, and there are people who are born on third base. Life is radically unfair. People get different amounts of everything, bad and good. So, we play the comparison game. We see what others have and we want it. What's the problem?

God says "no."

Exodus 20:17

¹⁷ "You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his male or female servant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor."

What is Coveting?

What is coveting? This is alternately translated as "selfishly want" or "lust." I like this one: it is to **set one's heart upon a thing**. It is to look across the room at someone opening his Christmas gift and say "I want that." "I wish that one were mine." His ox looks stronger, her house looks better, his wife seems nicer...all of those.

Not Just Coveting

Now, this command does not say, generically, "do not covet." This is another example of where our mental shorthand for these commands causes problems. There are lots of things you could "covet." We even say things like, "I covet your prayers." "I earnestly desire good things." "I set my heart upon the things and the person of God." I covet them.

It creates, via examples, a category of things that are off limits. **But you shall not covet...things that are his or hers:** things that

No human being can really know if you are coveting your neighbor's stuff.

already belong to another. This includes simple ownership: their house, their wealth or livestock; and more interpersonal “belonging” like one’s spouse or servants. No setting your heart upon someone else’s stuff.

I Want That — Logical and Practical

In most views of reality, this “coveting” makes total sense! It is logical; it is practical. It is entirely natural and inevitable, maybe, to look at those who have more and say “I want that.”

I want that!

If life is a ladder, it is only natural to look for the next rung. If life is a race, you are looking at and chasing whoever is in front of you. If life is monopoly, everyone knows who has the most money and covets as much of his money and property as he can! This all makes sense! Super logical. And God simply says “No.”?

This command is **completely unenforceable**. No penalty listed. No penalties to come in later laws as there were for the earlier commandments. No human being can really know if you are coveting your neighbor’s stuff. You can so easily hide this. This is inside your head and heart. Maybe even just a small voice you try to silence...and no one knows the envy within you! Especially when it is really something you desperately want...or something you have prayed for...asked for...waited for.

Root of Sin

We see easily how coveting can be a root of sin. We could work our way through the rest of the Nine:

1. Desiring an easier life and more blessings: we can chase after other gods,
2. ...or seek to manipulate God via idols.
3. Wanting to trade on the reputation of God for material gain: we use the name of God for our own purposes.
4. Wanting to trade more time for more stuff: we hijack God’s day for work.
5. Resenting our parents for not meeting all our wants: we dishonor them.
6. Our want translates to hate and murder.
7. Our want translates to lust and adultery.
8. Our want leads us to steal.
9. And our coveting that of our neighbor leads us to lie and deceive to tear that neighbor down to size!

This really rears its head when we think of the purpose of the law, the summary of righteousness — to love God and love our neighbor as ourselves. What a symptom of a lack of love: instead of feeling happy for someone, I just crave what he has. What a barrier to love is envy. What a poison in a relationship.

Envy is a seed that takes root — it is the beginning, the birth of something.

James hits this on the head. Coveting is a seed that grows:

James 1:14-15

¹⁴ But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. ¹⁵ Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.

Desire (same word in the Greek as is used when translating the ten commandments into Greek). Coveting desire, want! This is a root of all kinds of evil!

Solution — Living by the Request

So, we all are covetous, envious people...and it is a root of all kinds of sin...

It also seems so natural and easy. So much of our world and culture is aimed at feeding into this enviousness and covetousness. Commercials where everyone is laughing, having fun and everything looks beautiful are all carefully orchestrated to leave you saying, “I want that!”

We live in a culture and economy of envy.

How do I actually stop coveting? How do I “police” my heart? How do I silence that little voice within that whispers, “I want what he has”? When I see my neighbor driving a car I want, do I just slap myself in the face? Squeeze really hard? Distract myself? Go buy my own car so I don’t have to covet his?

There’s a solution! Since God says “do not covet your neighbor’s stuff...” there has to be a way. This command doesn’t mark a dead-end past where you just live in guilt, it marks out a path of righteousness, it shows us a boundary.

James 4:1-3

¹ What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don’t they come from your desires that battle within you? ² You desire but do not have, so you kill. You covet but you cannot get what you want, so you quarrel and fight. You do not have because you do not ask God. ³ When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.

Don’t chase after the gifts...ask the Giver!

Your focus is entirely on the wrong thing. If you know someone who is amazing at giving out the best Christmas gifts on earth... don’t chase after every gift He has given someone else! Make friends with that guy...then ask Him over for Christmas!

Strategy.

Jesus, brother of James (love that guy), said it this way:

Seek first the Kingdom of God, and His righteousness, then all these things will be added to you!

This is going to be the pattern of the nation of Israel and God: a people who keep chasing after what everyone else has, turning away from God.

Continued on next page...

Top Ten Words

Continued from previous page...

Chasing the gifts... turning away from the Giver.

Don't lust after the land of the people of Canaan...I have already promised to give it to you! Don't covet the lifestyle of the pagans...what I am giving you is so much better. True life! Don't set your heart after the gods of others, thinking they can get you more of what you want! Don't chase after things and women, lusts of the flesh and pleasures of the body. I want to give you so much, if only you would ask. If only you would seek.

I am giving you the Kingdom. I have laid out the path of Righteousness. I want to give you all the blessings of the Cosmos...but you are scrabbling over the baubles; you are wrestling over wrapping paper; you are killing one another, coveting and envying over wealth and relationships. You do not have because you do not ask God. And when you ask, you ask like He is a vending machine instead of a wise Father who knows best.

Father Christmas

Christmas is coming up, and Anna and I are deciding what the "good" things we want to give our kids are. They have written out a list, all the things that they want. And we want that look of joy on their face...we don't want to disappoint our children because we love them.

But we also know there are a whole host of other factors we are considering. What is going to be good for them? There are things on their list that will be actively harmful to them. There are things not on their list that will bring them more joy. And best, there are things, not on their list, that are going to bring us closer together — things we get to do together and enjoy together. But in that process, think of all the limitations we have. We do not know everything that they will need or even like. We make partial guesses as to what will be best for them. And most of all, we have limited resources with which to give to them.

God has no limitations as Giver. He, as the Father, carefully considers what gifts to give His beloved children. There is no financial cap. There is no external limit. Just dwell on that for a moment. We couple infinite potential with infinite love. **That is our Giver.** That is our Father.

If we don't have something, it is because we haven't asked, or the time is not right, or it wouldn't be good for us. So we wait. Sometimes we realize why it wasn't good for us. Sometimes we just trust in our perfect, loving, heavenly Father who desires to give good things to His children.

Christmas Envy

How silly of us to look at the possessions and life and gifts and talents of one another, and say "I want that." How silly of us. It is like Logan looking over at Arabelle's doll house in envy... because it is bigger than the gift he hasn't unwrapped yet. The gifts God is giving you are absolutely perfect for you. For

your pleasure, for the shaping of your soul, perfect for your relationship with God. Perfect.

We covet because we think small.

Love of God, Love of Neighbor

This command is so focused at our heart...and it is so powerful in its application.

The Ten Commandments lay out the Course of Righteousness... and they are summed up by this: Love God, Love your Neighbor. What is missing in our relationship with God that we long to possess what someone else possesses? That we envy, that we covet?

We don't trust the Giver. Trust the Giver.

If we understand that an infinite wise intelligence, possessed of infinite creative resources, who knows the desires of our hearts and hears our requests, loves us and desires only good things for us — if we embraced that...envy disappears, covetousness disappears, all of that simply evaporates.

Oh, I don't have that. I might wonder why; I might be curious; but I can absolutely know that the only reason I don't have his ox, his donkey, his car, his house and his wife...is that they wouldn't be good for me. And what a symptom of love for one another: when we can be truly happy for another's blessing without desiring that for ourselves.

I don't envy my kids. I'll occasionally snake a bite of their dessert...but only for the laughs. I want them to have good things, to enjoy dessert, to get presents at Christmas, to be ridiculously successful in all avenues of life. I want that for them — and I'll do anything I can to help them get there. And obviously I don't complain, I don't envy when I get good gifts. I am glad for me. Good for me, I say, to myself. I am glad I got that blessing or gift, well done!

Love your neighbor as yourself, with that same simple joy. How do we get there? Get to know the Giver. Test Him out. Ask Him, and see if He gives good gifts.

Not the gifts but the Giver. Then also the gifts of the Giver.

Don't look over at your neighbor and say "I want that." But you can look at what God has given you and say "I want this, thank you." You discover the good things God wants to give you and say, "I want that" — and our loving heavenly Father may just be waiting for you to ask! Crazy but true. And best of all, you can look to the person behind all the gifts, the Giver, and say "**I want You.**"

Philippians 3:8

⁸ *Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ.* [SR]

Expectancy and Agenda

Rev. Carl Greene
SDB Church
Hebron, PA



Go back to the year 1985ish with me. Picture a boy named Carl along with his brother opening Christmas presents with their parents. Wonderful expectancy filled the room as the boys dreamed of what was inside the packages. The parents swelled with joy as the boys celebrated the good gifts they received. Then, “it” happened. After all the gifts were open, said boy named Carl exclaimed, “Aren’t there any more?”

A quick side note is of importance here — now that I have been through the ordination process this past year, I realize that perhaps my response was not entirely appropriate? What happened was that I had bridged the gap between expectancy and agenda. Expectancy is looking forward to what is being given. Agenda is when you have a certain amount or type of loot you want to haul in. Expectancy and agenda can be easy to distinguish with Christmas gifts — but perhaps not so easy with mission and ministry.

Agenda has a way of pulling us off course to settle for good, rather than God’s preferred best. Be honest. When we get involved in ministry and mission — when we say “Here I am” to participate in youth group, or worship ministry, or Bible study, or whatever happens to be your passion to serve — is it with expectancy or agenda? Is your agenda a certain number of people, a certain level of study, certain outcomes, that people will acknowledge how great the group is, that you will achieve some sort of success? Those are certainly not bad things in and of themselves — but they are good compared to God’s best.

The “Here I am” phrase to make ourselves available to God’s service is a dangerous one. In Genesis 22:1, Abraham says “Here I am” prior to being told to offer his beloved son Isaac as a sacrifice. In Exodus 3:4, Moses

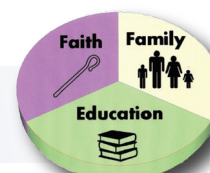
says “Here I am” prior to God telling him to go to Egypt and lead the people — even though he does not want to. In 1 Samuel 3:4-8, Samuel says “Here I am” and God tells Samuel a devastating message he does not want to have to share with his guardian Eli. In Isaiah 6:8, Isaiah says “Here I am! Send me.” — and God tells Isaiah to bring His message to a people who are not going to listen to Isaiah. In fact, their hearts will only be hardened as they hear the message. In Acts 9:10, Ananias says “Here I am, Lord” just before the Lord tells him to find Saul, the one Ananias would rather avoid at all costs. Clearly, “Here I am Lord” is a dangerous phrase — it boldly states that expectancy of God being glorified trumps agenda success.

How often is it that we tell God, “Here I am” — merely to serve out our own agenda? Here I am, God — for a better job, receiving an award, accolades for the Bible Study I lead, or maybe having friends come to church when I invite them. I am here for that, God — but not uncomfortable situations. I am more interested in agenda than dealing with sin in my life, dealing with messy situations in my life, confessing idols I place ahead of you, or working through strained relationships with people around me.

Funny how agenda uses religious talk to justify wrong motives. So how do I truly engage with expectancy as I join God in His work through, in, and around me? Simply stated, through education. Moving from a counterfeit agenda to a God-glorifying expectancy requires knowing His promises more than our circumstances — again, that’s education. Deuteronomy 6 lays out an educational road map for moving from agenda to expectancy. That is a road map we’ll explore together at General Conference 2016. [SR](#)

Rev. Dr. Kenneth Chroniger
Alfred Station SDB Church, NY

President’s Page





With the holidays just around the corner, Christians are provided an excellent opportunity to carry out the great commission. We go caroling, put on Christmas pageants, set up nativity scenes, have soup/turkey suppers, make cards for shut-ins and those in the hospital, and provide for the less fortunate through clothing and food drives. During the holiday season we are more focused and inspired than any other time of the year to spread the good news — and people tend to seem a little more receptive.

We are accomplished at focusing outwardly and doing little evangelism activities during Christmas to draw people in from the community. But what about those who decide to attend a service? People from all walks of life will be completing their due diligence by attending church once a year. Out of family obligation or misguided belief that as long as they darken the door of a church over the holidays, they're good with God and He's good with them. Sometimes people enter seeking, because without a loving Savior at your side the holidays can be daunting and empty. Whatever the reason, churches will make contact with many who may never be seen again or who only show up every so often to carry on a façade. Most of the difficult part is done — I mean the person has already crossed the threshold of the building so what's the big deal? Since it's Christmas, the church looks

pretty and there will be a good sermon paired with some special Christmas-y things going on. Is it really possible that we're wasting this opportunity when the church looks attractive and full? The whole ministry part of it should be covered with the advent readings, sermon, Jesus music and Bible passages.

If it's all covered, why do those holiday patrons only come to service once a year? The love of Christ is infectious — never more so than at this time of year when peace and goodwill is foremost in people's minds. So why is it that when people come through our doors they only want to stay for an hour once a year?

I don't know if there is an easy answer for this or if there is one at all. Everyone is different. There is no one thing that can act as a big Band-Aid and magically make everyone who walks through the doors of a church want to come back and be interested in Jesus. Despite that, I wonder if we aren't hurting our chances. Isn't there something we could be doing differently?

Are the people walking through the doors of our church receiving more Christmas than they could at a department store? I work for a retail chain and let me tell you we "do" Christmas very well! The decorations are stellar; the music is beautiful; the very feel of warmth, family and love is in the air. The one thing typically missing from the store experience is Jesus. Church is the one place where encountering Jesus should be an inescapable reality. We aren't talking nativity baby Jesus here, but the living God, Lord of the universe Jesus who humbled Himself, containing Himself into a human body and sacrificing Himself on the cross for you.

Is it impossible to ignore the living Jesus in your church? Would it be possible for someone to walk in, sit for an hour, and walk out — missing Jesus despite the presence that is so obvious to us? Try approaching your church as an outsider. Do the things that seem so obvious actually stand out or do they just fade into the background? Would a newcomer or "rare-comer" even notice Jesus? Would he be enveloped by Him? Church is just another department store without Jesus — albeit one having a holiday party. [SR](#)



*Dear Prospective SCSC
Host Churches,
Project Directors, and
SCSC Participants,*

In an effort to continue to provide quality leadership development to students, we are excited to announce that we are making some changes to the SCSC program for 2016. We have had the opportunity over the past few years to partner with the Missionary Society on both the Stained Glass track and a missions track. Our goal now is to provide a greater variety of foci for SCSC in order to give students experience in specific ministries of interest. By doing this, our hope is that the SCSC program will also be able to meet a greater variety of needs within local churches, associations, and at the denominational level.

Offering a variety of foci is dependent on project applications and student availability. We continue to welcome traditional projects. We have seen growth and development through these projects for the last 50 years. Also, we foresee the potential for development of specific giftings as students practice servant leadership in missions, worship leading, and community outreach/evangelism.

Missions Focus: We plan to continue to partner with the Missionary Society to offer an international missions track. This track is **available only to vets** as it takes previous SCSC experiences and applies them to a different cultural setting. It also has a heavier pre-training workload as the Perspectives course is required to help facilitate working in an international setting. The Perspectives course is a 15 week course (equivalent to a 3-hour college course) and needs to be taken at the Certificate level (minimum), which includes 2 hours of lecture/week, 3-4 hours of reading/week (100-200 pages), weekly quizzes, postings in forums, and a major paper as the final for the course.

Worship Leading Focus: This new track, focused on developing gifts in worship leading, is more aligned with the overall purpose of SCSC, so it will be taking the place of the Stained Glass track. These projects will have an emphasis on worship leading through music in a church, within an association, or in a community setting. It is designed to help SDB churches by training worship leaders.

Christian Education/Community Outreach/Evangelism Focus: There are many creative ways that churches are reaching out and witnessing to their communities. These include activities like serving in soup kitchens, street evangelism, fair booths, concerts in the park, backyard VBS, Christian camping, etc. Making connections in the community will be the primary focus of these projects.

What this means for students. On your application, it is important that you mark any foci preferences that you have. It is also important that you indicate your willingness to participate in SCSC if your preferred focus is not available. All foci are designed to develop servant leadership that will strengthen our churches, develop leadership, and revitalize our churches. Students are encouraged to explore and discover how God has gifted them. Developing the heart attitude of a servant will be emphasized.

What this means for potential projects. Think outside the box. We are encouraging you to get creative. If your church, community, or association has a need, develop a project around that specific need. Or if you have a strong program in a particular type of ministry and you would like to mentor students for the summer, we would also encourage you to develop a project. If you have questions about the application process or the appropriateness of a project, please contact the SCSC committee.

We are excited about working with you in this venture!

2015-2016 SCSC Committee

Helen Goodrich (chair), Debbie Bond, Micayla Crosby, Rachel Fox, Sanja Looper, Althea Rood 

God's Purpose For People - Through His People

“But I have raised you up for this very purpose, that I might show you my power and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth.” (Exodus 9:16)

Earlier this year I enrolled in the course *Perspectives on World Christian Movement* and found that it was primarily about purpose. As human beings, we rationalize and act upon an understanding of God's reason for us becoming Christians and our purpose as Christians. The reality is that God's actions and interactions are purpose-filled and we are meant to live in His purpose.

Between Genesis 1 and 11, we find the narrative of the earliest timeline of the human race: its birth (creation — Genesis 1-2); its degeneration (through sin — Genesis 3); and its division into different language groups (Babel, Genesis 11:1-9). God's actions in these situations were carried out with love and mercy, though not always seen on the face of it. As a result of man's willful disobedience, God expelled them from paradise and later divided them into diverse groups as ways of retarding their actions in pursuit of significance in and for themselves. As a part of His restorative plan, God later commissioned Abram to initiate the process of reuniting all peoples of the earth together, unto Himself. An exercise in hope, significance and purpose.

God's covenant with Abram in Genesis 12 disclosed His purpose for every people. In making the covenant with Abram, God promised to bless him and his descendants (seed). Abram and his seed were to then serve as a channel through which God's blessings could flow to the rest of the world. *“...and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you,”* Genesis 12:3b. We have much to be thankful for. God's purpose and work is to bless the world with His salvation, hence, *“God...sent his son Jesus to us firstly to bless us,”* Acts 3:26.

Though not all promises are immediately fulfilled, God is steadfast in love and faithfulness. Abraham and Sarah

died *“not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off,”* Hebrews 11:13a. Although Isaac was born to them in fulfillment of God's promise, their seed was not yet numerous, nor were the nations as yet blessed. We may not now see God's promises for us fulfilled but let us be patient knowing that God is faithful and can do all things.

“If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.” Galatians 3:29
As heirs of God's promise to Abraham, we are therefore expected to produce other seeds. Matthew 24:14 declares that the gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world. Taking on God's purpose is even made clearer with the Great Commission in Matthew 28:19-20a: *“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you:”*

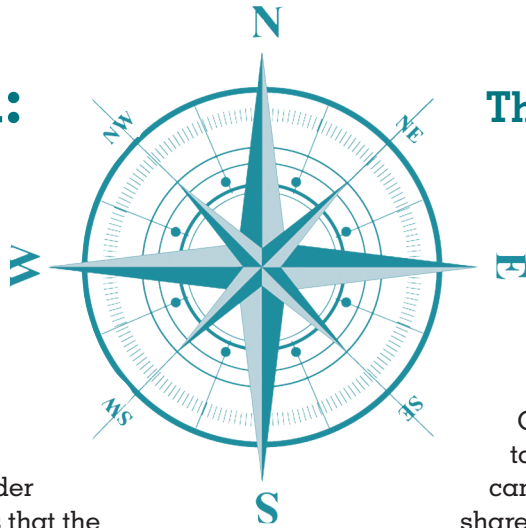
This brings into greater focus the cohesion and seamless-ness of the Bible expressing God's purpose. His purpose is reuniting all peoples of the earth together, unto Himself — making a solid foundation on which a person can build a relationship with Christ to ultimately join God's cause. His purpose propels sinners (through His Holy Spirit) to want to experience the blessing, and Christians into action to share the blessing. *“We were made to live for purpose. God Himself lives for purpose. The way to live with significance is to devote yourself to a purpose that is larger than your life.”* (Perspectives on World Christian Movement).

Declaring God's blessing in Christ is our purpose, this and all seasons. SR

— Garfield Miller
Missions Coordinator



Mission:



The reason for our existence

At the General Conference sessions in July 2015, the General Council shared with all in attendance a document called the "Vision Map." This document laid out for the reader and viewer four distinct areas that the General Council believes define and move forward Seventh Day Baptists as we advance God's Kingdom. These four sides are:

on anything that does not champion God's work in proceeding with the Gospel message!

Our Conference of churches has so many talented, gifted and intelligent people in it. I can't help but feel that we received the lion's share when God was handing out blessings.

I believe that is one of the reasons that God has kept Seventh Day Baptists around for so long...for a day just like this!

Mission — The reason for our existence

Core Values — Commitments that everybody lives by that are nonnegotiable

Focus — What is the most important thing we do day in and day out

Culture — Society we must create to realize our potential

For over 300 years, SDBs have been commissioned by Jesus Christ to use their gifts and resources to share His gospel. Today, we continue to advance His mission in North America in a unique way. We believe that this Vision Map generally demonstrates the way in which God has been and will continue to work through us to make new disciples and transform us into greater Christ-likeness.

During the next four months I will be attempting to explain the four sides of the Vision Map. This month we will start with the Mission. In the Vision Map we explained our mission in these words:

Our mission is to equip our churches to actively advance God's Kingdom.

Mission — The reason for our existence


The mission of the Seventh Day Baptist Conference of the USA & Canada is to simply provide, furnish, supply, prepare and train our people, our leaders, and our churches to vigorously and energetically move forward God's Kingdom work. This means we don't move forward

So, what is the Conference doing for you and your local church in these areas? I am glad you asked!

1. **Provide** — Pastoral Training, Pastoral Search, Missions Opportunities, Website Development, Research, Counseling and Advice.
2. **Furnish** — This magazine that you are reading, the *Sabbath Recorder*, is one of the oldest publications of its kind. And it is free! Yes, free! And available to all who want it!
3. **Supply** — Christian Education materials (*Helping Hand*), Tracts, Training through Seminars, Ongoing Pastors' Education, Summer Institute
4. **Prepare & Train** — Pastors, Lay People, Children, Teenagers, Young Adults through Seminary, Missions, Schooling, Seminars, SCSC, Dedicated Service

Many of our people serve on one of our Councils, or have served. These opportunities also help us identify our future leaders. The Women's Society's program, Summer Christian Service Corps (SCSC), also provides this future leadership training. Many of our pastors today have come through the SCSC program.

You see our Conference's mission really is about equipping our churches to actively advance God's Kingdom!

This equipping ministry is to provide the tools to the individual and to the churches that will move them forward, always advancing God's Kingdom! Some of the advanced equipping will even help those in leadership to sharpen their ministry tools! 

Executive Director
Rob Appel

Next Month: Core Values



Faith, Family and Friends: The Foundations of Fouke

A sentiment that could be true of every Seventh Day Baptist church

In the October 13, 2015, edition of the *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette*, there is an article by Frank Fellone about recent restoration efforts in Fouke, Arkansas, to beautify and improve life in the town. The article makes clear that the people of Fouke have banded together to cooperate in recent years to purchase and renovate historic sites throughout the town under the auspices of a group called Citizens for a Better Community. The group was founded in 2006 by ten unpaid volunteers who took matters into their own hands and mobilized an entire community behind their efforts. The article highlights Fouke's Seventh Day Baptist roots, noting that the founder of the town in 1890 was James Franklin Shaw, an SDB preacher in the late 1800s and early 1900s, as well as the distinguishing tenets of SDB life — especially the seventh-day Sabbath. As part of the restoration efforts in Fouke, a mural was commissioned which prominently includes Shaw's image. The heritage of the town is being acknowledged even as the residents make a better future for themselves and their community.

As it turns out, the values which underpin this new effort may not be a new phenomenon in Fouke's history. Fouke's founder, J. F. Shaw, was pastoring the Baptist church in Texarkana in 1883 when he encountered *The Sabbath Outlook*, an SDB publication edited by A.H. Lewis. Upon reading the publication, he became persuaded of the truth of the Sabbath and the next year withdrew from his church with 13 others to found the Texarkana, AR, SDB church. After a short time, however, it became clear that remaining in Texarkana was not an option for the little band of Sabbathkeepers as finding work became very difficult. In response, Shaw and his congregation moved to an area 16 miles south of Texarkana and founded the town of Fouke.

Soon after the little colony was founded, trouble struck as economic difficulty gripped the entire region. Compounding the difficulty, SDB settlers

from elsewhere had arrived to the area just before the economic stress arrived, raising tensions. Shaw wrote to the *Sabbath Recorder* in 1889 about the difficulty his group was facing, noting that he had expended his own personal finances to ensure the well-being of the fledgling church. Around that same time, he reported extreme exhaustion and ill health (including a bout of paralysis) that nearly led to his death. Still, the group managed to hang together.

A meetinghouse for the church and a school for the education of the children were the first orders of business for the new SDB town. Both were achieved in short order, with the school taking the name of Francis Bampffield, an early SDB leader in England. However, despite the quality of the teachers, the school ran into difficulties and quickly closed. The second attempt at a school began in 1891, under the leadership of Gideon H. Fitz Randolph, called the SDB Fouke Missionary School. Later changing its name to the Fouke Academy, the school stayed in operation until 1927, when public schools were ready to shoulder the burden of education in the community. The legacy of the Fouke school is a proud one and includes the training of leaders for the Conference and the nation.

Despite dealing with a seemingly constant stream of complications and difficulties, including squabbles inside the congregation itself, the Fouke group continued to work together to survive and demonstrate the Gospel in their worship and their lives. Ultimately, the Fouke church merged with the current Texarkana church in the late 1980s. The legacy of the church lives on in the work of Seventh Day Baptists. Today, if you drive into Fouke on I-49, you will be greeted with a sign that touts Fouke as a place of "Faith, Family and Friends." That's a sentiment that could be true of every Seventh Day Baptist church, and is amply demonstrated through the Fouke church's story. ^[SR]

¹ Seed Sown: *A study of SDB Work in the Southwest*, by Paul V. Beebe, published by the Southwestern Association in 1972.

² *Sabbath Recorder*, volume 45, issue 15, page 227. (April 1, 1889)



“You never go away from us,
yet we have difficulty in
returning to You.
Come, Lord, stir us up
and call us back.
Kindle and seize us.
Be our fire
and our sweetness.
Let us love. Let us run.”

— Augustine of Hippo
in *Confessions*

In Praise of Spiritual Disciplines

The Christian life is measured by cycles of struggle and growth. Each of us experiences (and should expect to experience) periods of struggle which cause us to grow deeper in our relationship with Christ, just as storms and drought cause plants to sink deeper roots into the ground. But how do we facilitate this growth, and how do we prepare for the times of testing?

The answer, for followers of Jesus Christ for most of the history of the Church, has been through the practice of spiritual disciplines. Put simply, spiritual disciplines are activities that followers of Christ undertake repeatedly, with perseverance and intent, which God uses to grow their relationship with Him. Over the course of years, faithfully seeking the Lord through the disciplines helps us to be formed spiritually and made strong so that we have the resources we need to endure difficulties, testing, and grief.

There is something less than full agreement on which activities are proper spiritual disciplines, but most of the lists include the following disciplines:

- **Solitude (and Silence)**, which is taking time alone in the quiet with the LORD, actively removing distractions so that we can focus all of our attention on Him.
- **Fasting**, which is foregoing of physical food as an act of dependence on God for sustenance.
- **Simplicity (or Frugality)**, which is the act of learning to live with less so that you can be more generous with the resources God has given you, and be thankful even with less “stuff.”
- **Chastity**, which is the foregoing of sexual thought or contact to seek greater intimacy with God.
- **Sacrifice**, which is service to others, often in secret, done beyond what would be normal, to the point where it costs us something real, again as an act of dependence on God.

- **Study**, which is immersion of the self in the Word of God so that we can store it in our hearts until it affects changes in our thoughts and behaviors.
- **Worship**, which is the cultivation of an attitude of awareness of God’s greatness, which leads to heartfelt response from us with our entire being.
- **Prayer**, which is the act of being in the presence of God as we are, without pretense, seeking His guidance as we lay ourselves bare before Him.
- **Fellowship**, which is our participation in harmony and support with the other members of Christ’s body.
- **Confession**, which is the marriage of prayer and fellowship as we lay ourselves bare before God and others in an effort to make clear our trust in the Gospel for forgiveness and restoration
- **Accountability (or Submission)**, which is our humble response to our awareness that we cannot live the lives God has called us to on our own without the support of the body of Christ, as we willingly submit to the guidance and correction of others.

These disciplines, when employed under the guidance and leading of the Holy Spirit, can aid us in following after Jesus Christ and store up spiritual resources which can support us when we encounter obstacles. If you are regularly struggling in your walk, it is worth prayerfully considering if engaging in one or more of these disciplines would benefit you and the cause of Christ.

It is the goal of the Christian Education Council to aid you in your efforts in these areas. Though we do not have available resources in each of these areas, we do encourage you to talk to your local church pastor or contact us so that we can encourage you and help you find your way to helpful resources. At present, we are encouraging everyone to engage in our Scripture Memory Program, as it provides a means of achieving the discipline of study as we hide God’s Word in our hearts. Please contact us if you have questions or need resources! May God aid us as we all find our way back, repeatedly and regularly, to Him. [SR](#)



Peace

by Annie Lloyd

Living in this world, it is difficult for us to maintain our relationship with God. We become so distracted by all of our plans, struggles, worries, doubts, expectations, and all the motions of everyday life, that we often forget that God is always with us.

In John 14:27, Jesus says: *“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.”*

God voluntarily gives us peace in this world full of chaos. The world will never give you peace, because peace is a gift from God. As God said, *“I do not give to you as the world gives.”*

The world gives us pain, struggle, anxiety, uncomfot, death, sadness, and destruction, while God gives us love, joy, peace, comfort, life, and freedom. The world will never give us what God has already given us, nor will it devote itself to making us happy. In fact, the world will tear you down and wear you out until you feel like you have nothing left to give.

As we are living in the midst of this world, Jesus says to us: *“Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.”* Jesus reminds us to not let the world consume our hearts and minds. Though easier said than done, we should not be afraid. He gives us peace. Philippians 4:67 says: *“Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”*

Believe it or not, God wants us to be thankful in any kind of situation. Even in our troubles God wants us to give Him thanks in prayer. When we do this, the peace of God that goes beyond all understanding, will protect our hearts and minds from this troublesome world. All we need to do, in order to obtain this indescribable peace, is to have faith that He will give it to us.

Philippians 4:13 says: *“I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength.”* Notice how it says **all** things through Christ, not just **some** things through Christ. Remarkably, we can do anything through Christ. We can heal the sick with one word, we can move mountains, we can save lives, we can do all things through Christ. The only barrier to doing these things, is a lack of faith. If we pray and have confidence in the Lord, then anything is possible. So we shouldn't let the world trouble us, or discourage us, for God will give us the peace and strength our hearts need. SR



THE BEACON

Gabi Osborn

Boulder SDB Church, CO

Resolution Passed at 2015 General Conference Sessions Affirming Previous SDB Statements on Marriage

Posted On: November 2, 2015, by John Pethtel

The following resolution was introduced and passed during the 2015 General Conference Sessions. Your church is encouraged to contact your liability insurance provider and to examine its own documents and policies concerning same-sex unions.

WHEREAS, God in His Divine wisdom created and intended marriage to be the covenanted, conjugal union of one man and one woman (Genesis 2:18–24; Matthew 19:4–6; Hebrews 13:4); and

WHEREAS, Seventh Day Baptists through action at their General Conference sessions in 2003 and 2004 strongly affirmed “that the Divinely instituted union of marriage is solely between a man and a woman.”; and

WHEREAS, The Supreme Court of the United States has ruled that states shall be required to grant legal recognition as “marriages” to same-sex partnerships; and

WHEREAS, The redefinition of marriage to include same-sex couples is apt to continue to erode the religious liberty and rights of conscience of all who remain faithful to the idea of marriage as the conjugal union of husband and wife; and

WHEREAS, The Bible affirms the value of all human beings as “created in His image” and calls us to love our neighbors, including those who disagree with us about the definition of marriage; now, therefore,

LET IT BE RESOLVED, That the delegates to the Seventh Day Baptist General Conference session in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, July 26-August 1, 2015, continue to “strongly affirm that the Divinely instituted union of marriage is solely between a man and a woman.”

LET IT BE FURTHER RESOLVED, That the religious liberty of individual citizens or institutions should not be infringed as a result of believing or living according to the Biblical definition of marriage;

LET IT BE FINALLY RESOLVED, That Seventh Day Baptists love our neighbors and extend respect in Christ’s name to all people, including those who may disagree with us about the definition of marriage.

Celebrate

Celebrating Our Children

The New York City Seventh Day Baptist Church celebrated their annual “Children’s Banquet” on Sabbath, May 28. It was a beautiful evening of songs, dance, and fun as the children glorified God with their talents. The theme for the event was “Gifted Hands” — fitting reminder of the God-given talents and abilities within each child that need to be encouraged and nurtured for their spiritual and personal growth.

A highlight of this year’s banquet was a beautifully arranged musical rendition by the Youth Band — a ministry that has blossomed with renewed encouragement and support from their church family. Another

highlight of the evening came in the form of a powerful message delivered by Sis. Mauva Campbell, Sabbath School teacher and faithful member of our church. She alluded to the difficult early upbringing of famed neurosurgeon, Dr. Ben Carson, and the role his mother played in keeping him focused despite the hardships she faced. Like Dr. Carson’s mother, parents and guardians must be determined to keep their children on the right path so that they will realize their potential.

The final performance was a funky fashion show put on by the children. After first showcasing their favorite spring and summer attire, they threw together the most unusual outfits they could think of: bright colors, mismatched shoes, single bare feet, clothing worn backwards, and even a shirt worn as a pair of pants! After such a fun-filled evening, we cannot wait to see what blessings are in store for next year!

— Christian Murphy
Missions Advocate

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Bond Voted to Serve as Assistant Pastor

On October 18, 2015, the **Portland Area SDB Church** voted for Levi Bond to serve as Assistant Pastor. Pastor Levi has served this congregation for many years in an “unofficial” capacity alongside Pastor Jerry Vaught. Pastor Levi has also served as pulpit supply for other SDB churches as well as being the President of the Northwest Association of SDBs for many years. Levi’s heritage is rich in pastors: both of his grandfathers, one great-grandfather, one great uncle, and four cousins have been SDB pastors.

Congratulations to Pastor Levi and the Portland Area SDB Church! 

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BIRTH

RICHARDS – A daughter, Audrey Dawn Richards, was born to Emily and Greg Richards of the Texarkana SDB Church, AR, on August 21, 2015.

DEATH NOTICES

LOONEY – JENNA RICHARDS LOONEY, 31, daughter of Pastor Dan and Dawn Richards, of the Texarkana SDB Church, AR. Jenna was born January 10, 1984, and died October 17, 2015.

BURDICK – DR. VICTOR BURDICK went to be with his Lord and Savior on Saturday, November 7, 2015. A service celebrating his life was held on Saturday, November 14, at the Seventh Day Baptist Church of Berlin, NY.

PEARSON – BETTIE PEARSON, wife of David Pearson, passed away November 9, 2015. We are rejoicing that her suffering is over and she rests in the arms of her Lord. Funeral arrangements were at the Paint Rock SDB Church, Paint Rock, Alabama.

How to contact General Council:

Email address to all of the General Council members:
sdbgeneralcouncil@seventhdaybaptist.org

Regular mail can be sent to:

Susie Fox, General Council Chair
 1722 Taylor Station Road, Blacklick, OH 43004.

OBITUARY

DYE — Leola A. Dye, 69, of Skaneateles Turnpike, Brookfield, NY, passed away Sunday, October 25, 2015 at her home.

Leola was born November 5, 1945, in Leonardsville, NY, a daughter of the late Leslie A. and Henrietta A. Davis Welch. She received her early education in Leonardsville, NY, and was a graduate of Harrisville High School in West Virginia. She pursued her higher education at Salem College in Salem, WV, obtaining her degree in education. Leola taught school for eleven years before moving back to New York. She continued teaching for a brief time and then received her CNA degree. Following that, she worked at the Harding Nursing Home in Waterville for twenty years until retiring. On November 29, 1980, Leola married Chester I. Dye in Leonardsville. She enjoyed crocheting, embroidery and reading.

Leola was an active member of the Seventh Day Baptist Church of Leonardsville/Brookfield where she was on the Sunshine Committee, played the piano for services, and sang in the choir.

Surviving are her loving husband, Chester; a son, Duane C. Dye of Brookfield; her sisters and brothers-in-law, twin sister, Leona, and Michael Burdick of West Edmeston; Julia and Gregory Randolph of Belpre, OH; Martha and Jerry Vaught of Portland, OR; brother and sisters-in-law, Bert and Susan Welch of West Winfield; and Patricia Welch of West Winfield; and several nieces and nephews who loved her dearly. She was predeceased by a brother, Lowell Welch, and a sister, Cynthia Tichnell.

Services were held on Saturday, October 31, 2015, at the Seventh Day Baptist Church, Huey Road, Leonardsville, NY. Interment will be private in the Brookfield Rural Cemetery. Contributions in her memory may be made to the church, PO Box 157, Brookfield, NY 13314; or to the Brookfield Fire Department, PO Box 78, Brookfield, NY 13314.

DECEMBER Education

Youth/Adult

Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

– 2 Timothy 2:15 KJV

Junior

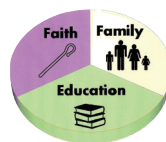
Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed ...

– 2 Timothy 2:15 KJV

Primary

Study to show thyself approved unto God ...

– 2 Timothy 2:15 KJV



Coming Next Summer:
 July 31 – August 6

Seventh Day Baptist
 Conference 2016

Houghton College, Houghton, NY

Facebook: SDB Conference 2016
 #sdb2016

<http://www.sdb2016.com>



Stories ...

are magic

are significant in simplicity

are NOT just for children!

We hope that you and your

children enjoyed the

Christmas stories.

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and additional offices

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