

December 2009

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Southern Gospel's First All Digital Magazine digital

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# The Gift of a Second Chance



Sonya Isaacs'  
Answered  
Prayers

Debbie  
Bennett:  
A New  
Chapter

Artists share  
testimonies  
and Christmas  
traditions

# THE PUBLISHER'S PERSPECTIVE: A VIDEO MESSAGE TO READERS FROM ROB PATZ



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A: Admit that you are a sinner.

*Romans 3:23- For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.*

B: Believe that, because of your sin, you deserve to spend eternity in Hell. However, Jesus shed His blood and died on the cross of Calvary to pay the debt for our sin. He then rose from the dead three days later, proving His victory over death, Hell, and the grave. He offers this as a free gift to anyone who will accept it in faith.

*Romans 5:8- But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.*

*Romans 6:23- For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

C: Call upon Jesus and ask Him to come into your heart, forgive your sins, and make you one of His

children.

*Romans 10:9- That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.*

*Romans 10:13- For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.*

If you would like to accept God's free gift of salvation, then all you have to do is pray and ask Him. Your prayer might sound something like this:

*Dear Jesus, I know that I am a sinner, and I know that I deserve Hell because of it. However, I believe that you died on the cross and rose again in three days to pay for my sin. I ask you to come into my heart, cleanse my sin, and make me one of your children. Thank you, Jesus. Amen.*

Please remember that simply saying a prayer doesn't save you. You must believe this in your heart as well. If you have any questions about salvation, or if you just prayed to receive Christ, please e-mail us at [sgnscoops@gmail.com](mailto:sgnscoops@gmail.com). We'd love to rejoice with you! God bless you!



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# Scoops

digital



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SGN Scoops exists to showcase what is distinguished, intriguing, and real about southern & country gospel music. We seek with our stories to shed light on people fulfilling a call to minister - to make or support the making of music that excites an audience and glorifies God.  
 And we seek to do it interactively.





## SECOND CHANCES & SWEET RELEASES

There is a Christmas song that gives me chills and tears and an overflowing cup every time I hear it.

It's not my beloved Bing Crosby singing "Silver Bells," or Celine Dion singing "O Holy Night," or any of the six million renditions of "Jingle Bells," which, let's face it, is fun to sing but has nothing to do with Christmas. It's one that, as far as I know, was first recorded by Gaither Vocal Band, with Guy Penrod on lead vocals, called "Hand of Sweet Release." It was written by Guy Penrod and Michael Sykes.

My husband sings it, too. In fact, he sang it at our first baby's dedication. It seemed an odd choice, I'm sure, but the song, in all its soaring notes and beautiful chords, is one about grace, which truly is the message of Christmas.

*'There's an end to all the waiting.'*

Waiting is something at which I've never excelled. My impatience is one of my most prominent traits and tallest hurdles. It used to be such a challenge to me that I would try to force things to happen, and this, as you can surmise, often ended in catastrophic consequences.

As we celebrate The Gift of a Second Chance in this issue, I can tell you in as

much transparency as I have that the life I have now very well could

have and should have been another catastrophic outcome. I made decisions in the years before my marriage that were willfully sinful. I hurt people who trusted me. I rebelled against truths and teachings at the root of my spiritual beliefs on the hope that I could make it right later. I have no right to be where I am.. yet, I am.

The story of grace shows us that we can never make things right. We can never reach God on our own. Oh, but He reaches us. And He so longs to reach us, even in our darkest pits of sin and despair and regret, that He stripped His own Son, His own Self, of royalty and divinity so that He could be born into means that most of us would find appalling to expose our children to.

I am so grateful His grace reached me and turned my life around. I am so grateful that every label that the enemy could throw at me will no longer stick to me. God has made me a wife and mother and servant and encourager, but more importantly, He has adopted me as His daughter, and nothing can separate me from that love.

As you read other stories of the Second Chance, I hope you will feel the anointing under which this issue came together. I believe in my heart that too many of you, of us, suffer under the deceptiveness that we can never be good enough in God's eyes, when the truth is: to Him, we are beautiful, spotless, and irreplaceable. To Him, we are a gift to be cherished. He made us that way!

KELLY CAPRIOTTI BURTON

greenish me



continues--

I won't pretend, friends and readers, that I don't still struggle with those labels and lies. Whenever I write about the grace, part of me sits back and waits for some well-meaning Christian to point a finger at me and say, "We know what you really are!" Thank God He makes His grace so tangible in our lives.

I see His grace, His promise of a Second Chance, when I look at my children. For various reasons, from misguided interpretations of scripture to medical reports that turned out to be no match for a miracle, I thought I would never have babies. This December marks five years since I received that diagnosis. This December, I will celebrate not only with my husband and "I do" children (three more daily reminders of God's ability to make beauty from our ashes!), but with my 3 year old and almost-2 year old daughters.

My second chance twirls around me every day, wearing pink tutus and sparkly shoes, repeating everything I say, demanding macaroni and repeated plays of their favorite songs, and getting stickers and Play-Doh

and grape jelly all over everything. They are my daily, visible reminder that in the long run of eternity, God doesn't really care what I did before the grace captured me: He cares about what I do with the grace He has given.

**'Dearest child of new beginnings, be the start of something beautiful..'**

... You can see why that lyric means so much to me.

May this Christmas find you in the midst of a new chance.. an opportunity to say goodbye to something painful, a call to take the grace in your life and pay it forward in your family, your church, your workplace, your circle, a commitment to take the life He gave you and turn it into a testimony of redemption and praise.

Take hold of the hand of sweet release, and the merriest of Christmases will be yours!

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# Interviews cover second chances, dreams fulfilled



Scoops' Ms. Lou and her husband Howard

As we close another year of involvement in gospel music events across the nation, I feel in my spirit a new focus on ministry by the artists and industry leaders. The Bible states that we are "known by the love we

have for each other" and this was evident at Branson Gospel Music Convention, the National Quartet Convention, Dollywood, Nashville, Dallas, and the local concerts we attended. Response from the fans reveals both the need and the appreciation for the message of hope in our gospel songs.

I sang my first gospel song at the age of ten and have served in most aspects of the industry. My family, the Wills Family, helped pioneer gospel music television in the sixties. I have hosted seven different TV series over the years and consider television my "calling." Howard, my husband of sixty-three years, and our son and daughter have all been supportive. When I think of the friendships gained, I am overwhelmed at God's provision.

On camera interviews with nationally known artists I taped at the Branson Gospel Music Convention are the beginning of a new television series I am developing called *Lou Hildreth & Friends*, featuring gospel music personalities expressing their faith.

At Branson, one of the strongest interviews is [Ron Blackwood](#) telling the viewers that "God is a God of the second chance." In this candid conversation, Ron tells how his faith helped him survive his years in prison. He recalls a touching incident when he is released from prison with only the clothes on his back and \$50, he was met at the bus station in his hometown by the famous bass singer, J. D. Sumner, who gave him money and great words of encouragement. This was the beginning of a journey back to a blessed life with his wife and sons, plus a second chance at his lifetime commitment to gospel music. Ron and I close the interview with details of his formation of the Blackwood Quartet and the satisfaction of taking the message to the multitudes that "God is indeed a God of the second

chance." To schedule this fabulous quartet, contact Ron at [ronblackwoodmc@aol.com](mailto:ronblackwoodmc@aol.com) or [www.theblackwoodbrothersquartet.com](http://www.theblackwoodbrothersquartet.com)

We interviewed several other artists for the *Lou Hildreth & Friends* series. It was fun to be on camera with [Gary McSpadden](#) telling our listeners about the years we worked together in Nashville. Gary has been highly visible on the Branson scene since his move there a few years ago. His newest venture is a preaching service on Sunday mornings at 9:00, Faith & Wisdom Center, Grand Country Square Theatre, Branson. It is being telecast in major markets. Gary and Carol are treasured friends.

Another friend, Buddy Burton, currently with the Florida Boys, talked about his years in gospel music, beginning with our first meeting when he was singing with the Smitty Gatlin Trio, later the Statesmen, and then Master's Five. The interview with [Ed Enoch of The Stamps Quartet](#) was touching as he talked about his love for gospel music and his years with Elvis Presley.

[Josh Garner](#) gave us an update on his role as lead singer and arranger for the Blackwood Quartet. Both of us agreed on the incredible talent of their tenor John Rulapaugh. Josh surprised me in the interview when he mentioned that he was acquainted with my songwriting nephew before he knew me. I was thanking him, on camera, for the Florida Boys recording of "Keep Pressing On" by Bobby Lee Wills and told him how thrilled I had been to hear them sing it at the National Quartet Convention. Josh added that the Florida Boys had sung the song for a pastor's conference where the great Dr. Adrian Rogers made the statement "every pastor in the nation should hear this song."

Some of the other interviews on this Branson Series, Volume One, are with [Mary Fay Jackson of Family Friendly Entertainment](#), [Bill Dykes of Sky Angel Faith and Family Television](#), [Bill Traylor of Mansion Entertainment](#), and [Dave Emery of Chuch Wagon Gang](#). (Vol. One DVD of 15 interviews available)

My thanks to these artists, also to Mike Culpepper for excellent production, and to the Branson Gospel Music Convention. We appreciate the heart for ministry in the leadership of Rod and Kelly Burton. May God be glorified in all we do in the coming year!

*Lou Wills Hildreth*

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# Eyes Wide Open

The Interaction of  
Faith and  
pop culture



## The best Christian Christmas movies out there

'Tis the season, once again, to celebrate true faith and a real miracle by indulging in as much consumerism as we can, and telling each other stories about the fake miracle of a fat bearded man who breaks into people's homes once a year.

I am, of course, completely kidding. Sarcasm aside, I love all the traditional celebratory elements associated with Christmas, and as long as people keep their activities Christ-centered, I don't see any harm in it.

One of my favorite pastimes at Christmas is watching the best holiday movies and specials. Here's a list of some of the most redemptive of those works.

**A CHRISTMAS CAROL (1951)** – Our theme this issue is "second chances." And Dickens' tale is the most famous second-chance story of the holiday (and with good reason).

While there have been numerous adaptations over the years, with Scrooge performed by everyone from George C. Scott to Bill Murray, my favorite remains the version with Alastair Sim. Sim gives an amazing performance, running the full gamut of Scrooge's emotions, from a believably angry, lonely old man to a man unmistakably touched by grace and joy.

Watch the next-to-last scene as Sim's Scrooge laughs at his work desk. Then he picks up his ink quill and tries to get serious, saying, "I don't deserve to be so happy." Then he tosses his quill aside and starts laughing again, saying, "But I can't

help it. I simply can't help it!" This is a man who knows that he's been forgiven, who

fully realizes that his slate has been wiped clean. This is the most powerful dramatization of Godly humility and joy that I've ever seen. Whenever I watch it, I laugh—and cry—too.

I don't know if the film's writers were Christians or not, but this seems to be the most Christian-influenced adaptation. As with most others, Bob Cratchit's line about Tiny Tim is here: "He said that it might be nice at church for people to remember who it was that made lame men walk and blind men see." But this is the only version that I know of that has the Spirit of Christmas Present saying that he lives all year long, "just as the babe born in Bethlehem does not live in men's hearts once a year, but all 365 days."

It's also interesting that this version calls Scrooge's three visitors "spirits" instead of "ghosts," which suggests that they might be ministering angels. And the Spirit of Christmas Past speaks of Scrooge's "salvation," not "reclamation" or some other generic word that suggests Scrooge might earn his way to heaven with enough good works. This Scrooge can only be saved by grace.

Another gem of dialogue is heard when Scrooge goes to visit his nephew's house and meets his nephew's wife for the first time. He asks her, "Can you forgive a foolish old man for having no eyes to see, no ears to

hear, all these years?" Again, when was the last time you heard the con-



cept of true repentance expressed so eloquently?

**MIRACLE ON 34TH STREET (1947):** For the most part, I can't get into movies or specials that insist that kids believe in Santa, and treat the kids as bad if they don't. (Spoiler alert: He's NOT real, folks!) But this particular movie always charms me, in part because of all the wonderful performances, but also because the lawyer's TK defense oddly sounds very similar to C.S. Lewis' famous "liar-lunatic-Lord" argument for Jesus.

To paraphrase: it's no good saying that Jesus was just a good moral teacher, or that Kris in this movie is just a nice man. Jesus claimed to be God; Kris claimed to be Santa Claus. Now if you or I were to claim either of these things about ourselves, no one could call us "just a nice person." We're either completely crazy, and we might as well claim to be waffle irons, or we're the worst kinds of liars, deliberately misleading as many people as we can.



The only other possibility is if the evidence shows that the person is in fact who he claims to be. In this movie, sufficient evidence is made for all to believe in Santa by the film's end. And Christ will show himself to be who He says He is, for those who care to look.

A CHARLIE BROWN CHRISTMAS (1965) – What more can be said about a TV special where a character (Linus) gives the Gospel account of Christmas at the end? Certainly no such special would hit the air today, or even be allowed through by the networks. I'm thankful that this beloved story remains in reruns every year.

After giving his recitation, Linus calmly walks offstage, picks up his blanket, and says, "That's what Christmas is all about, Charlie Brown." Amen. And God bless us, every one!

Tom Holste had a friend in college whom he called "Lucy" (as in Peven-sie) and she began calling him "Linus" (as in Van Pelt). One of his nephews has managed to convince his younger sister that he—the nephew—is actually Santa Claus. And Tom thinks that's just adorable.



Tom Holste is a writer living in Chicago and a graduate of Act One, a screen-writing program specifically geared toward Christians. He has written and directed numerous short scenes for church events. His website can be found at [tomholste.com](http://tomholste.com).

## Light for the lost

Monthly encouragement from a teacher of Good News  
By Rhonda Mitchell Frye

It's indeed the most wonderful time of the year. Yes, there'll be parties for hosting, marshmallows for toasting, much mistle-toeing, but sadly not all hearts will be glowing. In spite of the kids' jingle belling and everyone telling "Be of good cheer", hearts can't possibly be glowing until they've received the Light of the World as Lord and Savior. Christians festively celebrate that the King of glory left His glory to dwell with us in order that we could share in His glory, but the rest of the world completely misses the true meaning of Christmas.

John MacArthur's book called *Six Ways Satan Is Stealing Christmas* acknowledges our society isn't the first society to miss the point of Christmas either. MacArthur accuses the Inn Keeper to be the first person to miss the point. He was preoccupied and didn't have room. Then there was Herod; he was jealous and afraid someone was going to take his throne. Next in line were the Chief Priests. They were indifferent and self righteous. Almost the whole town of Jerusalem missed it, except for the shepherds. MacArthur goes on to say the Romans missed it because of their idolatry, and due to over familiarity, so did the people of Nazareth. More than 2,000 years later, not much has changed and the issues remain the same. None the less, Jesus Christ came into the world on a mission to seek and save His Father's lost children and is still carrying out His mission today through the Holy Spirit in His body of believers.

"Lost" is defined as: unable to find ones' way, morally fallen, bewildered, confused or destroyed. All of these definitions describe those in desperate need of a second chance that only a second birth could bring or a second chance leading back to God's grace from which one has wandered. God didn't send Jesus into the world expecting man to find Him, instead, He instructed Jesus to "seek." To seek is defined as: to go in search of, to try to locate, to look for, or intentionally find. Using Jesus as a role model, God expects us to do the same. The Christmas season is prime opportunity to share the love of Christ and many ministries are taking advantage of the season in creative ways. The saying, "People don't care what you know until they know you care" is true. There are a variety of ways to creatively witness. Scoops magazine applauds the

continues>



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## >continued

following ministries and their efforts and would like to share their strategies hoping to motivate everyone to share Christ's love this season.

- First Baptist Church of Forney, TX will turn off the lights on Christmas Eve and light the candles. The community enjoys a beautiful night of music and a Christmas message. Many people attend this service that typically do not attend church the rest of the year. Each year, the church is filled to its maximum seating capacity with guests sitting in the choir loft. "It's standing room only."- Church Member, Edwin Adcock

- Riverside Baptist Church, Orlando, FL hosts a "No Sale Yard Sale." During the year, they prepare by collecting furniture, household items, toys, clothing and more then set it out the first weekend of December as all "free" items. As the "sale" takes place, a prayer tent is available to meet prayer needs and to distribute literature. Men from the congregation make minor car repairs and oil changes at no charge as well. Church members receive evangelism training during the year and are ready to mingle with guests sharing Christ in conversation. One of the biggest blessings, according Pastor Mark Williams, is seeing children from a nearby public housing complex receive much needed shoes. In addition to the "No Sale Yard Sale" event, Riverside Baptist Church is working with another local church to put on a Christmas musical and dinner party for the community.

- Woody and Renee Woodfin have been on staff at Campus Crusade for Christ for thirteen years in New York City. Before driving into the city to be dazzled by the lights of Manhattan, the Woodfins, along with family and friends, will make a stop in Brooklyn. There is a family in need there and the needs are met tangibly with groceries, presents and prayer for everyone in the family. According to Mr. Woodfin, the family enjoys the sights of the beautiful city afterwards in a whole new light. The Woodfins have been helping this same family for many years and will help meet their needs beyond Christmas. "By our actions, we are continuing to share the gospel with the whole family."- Woody Woodfin

- Teen Tree Ministries was founded by Brent and Misty Jenó of Ringgold, GA. The Jenó's are local business owners whose hearts has been stirred to reach out to underprivileged teenagers. The Jenó's were concerned when they realized many organizations had age limits leaving out the "tweens and teens" at Christmas time. Heartbroken and compelled to make a difference, they began trimming their own budget to allow provision for a few teens. Although they were doing all they could, they were saddened for the others they couldn't afford to help. Since 2003, they have worked tirelessly to gain support from other business owners and ministries working within the school sys-

tem to provide for as many teens as possible. God blessed their generosity and service so much so, the ministry outgrew what they could handle as a family. Their local church, Rock Pointe Worship Center, stepped in to provide the support they needed to continue to grow. This year the Teen Tree has held a golf tournament and a bike ride to raise support and is expected to provide clothing and other essential items for more than 100 local teens.

As parking lots jam, restaurants pack and lines form, there will be opportunities of grace extending. We at Scoops would like to encourage everyone to share the truth of why Christmas is the most wonderful time of the year. Jesus is truly the only Light that can set hearts aglow! In closing, here are a few practical suggestions:

- Give a gospel tract to the person standing in line behind you
- Send Christmas cards to soldiers
- Have a birthday party for Jesus, inviting un-churched children
- Write about being a Christian in your family letter
- Set up a mitten tree in your home or church. Decorate the tree with mittens, and then donate the items
- Christmas Conversations- Ask people what they're doing for Christmas. If they ask you, explain what Christmas means to you
- Organize shopping assistance for shut-ins
- Holiday Plants- Deliver plants to nursing home residents
- Caroling- to nursing homes, children's hospitals, hospice patients
- Send cards to missionaries
- Christmas Eve/Christmas Day doughnut give away- pass out doughnuts to people having to work on the holidays
- Christmas paper/tape give away- In parking lots or door to door
- Business Outreach- take cookies to local businesses
- Hot dog giveaway- store parking lots
- Parades- give away hot chocolate
- Host community Christmas sing-along

Rhonda Frye is a full time minister of music serving the Lord in at least three different ways. She teaches a preschool music program, she serves her local congregation as the worship leader and associate pastor and she is a singer/songwriter/recording artist as well. Rhonda lives in Ringgold, Georgia and is supported by her husband, Eric and their three children.





We all look forward to taking time off at Christmas to be with family and friends. Many Southern Gospel artists look forward to December as one of the few times during the year when they can slow down and relax in their own homes for more than just a day or two. Some have special plans for concerts and recordings that they don't get to do at any other time of the year. And some just plan to sit around the tree, visit with family and enjoy the season.

Debra Talley of the Talley Trio says, "My family lives in Kentucky, about seven hours from where we live in Tennessee, and we go to my Mom's the week before Christmas because I'm the only one that lives away. So it's always our family tradition that we go and have a big family gathering with my family. Then we come back and Christmas Eve is with Roger's family. Christmas morning is just our little family. We cook a really big Christmas brunch, much more than the three of us actually need. After our gifts and

# A Southern Gospel Christmas

By  
Lorraine Walker

"We don't really do a whole lot at Christmastime because we do so much all year long," adds Lauren Talley. "We enjoy just sitting, watching ball games, eating

good food and being with family. We really take a lot of pleasure in the simple things at Christmas. We enjoy our family get-togethers. Going to see my mom's family in Kentucky is one of the most special times we have all year because we

don't get to be with them a lot."

David Sutton, tenor for Triumphant, is looking forward to family time as well. "Every year is different for me and my family. I've been married 14 and a half years and have a five-year-old girl and ten-year-old girl. My parents and in-

laws live about nine hours from each other. So one year we will go to my parents and the next year we go to my in-laws. Santa is a really smart guy. He has always known which grandparents to show up at. Our girls have always thought that was the coolest thing!

"We love Christmas," continues Sutton. "It's a time when our families can be together and open presents and celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ. Almost every year when we are at the in-laws we have to watch *A Christmas Story* together. That's a favorite. When at my parents we always attend the Christmas Eve program at the church I grew up in and where I played almost every part in the program. Memories can be sad sometimes at Christmas. However, they can be cherished as well.

Soloist Sharron Kay King has spent the last couple of Christmas seasons on the road promoting her Christmas album. This year, she is staying home and enjoying time with family. Chris Hester, another Southern Gospel soloist, will also be enjoying December with family and friends in Oklahoma and Tennessee.

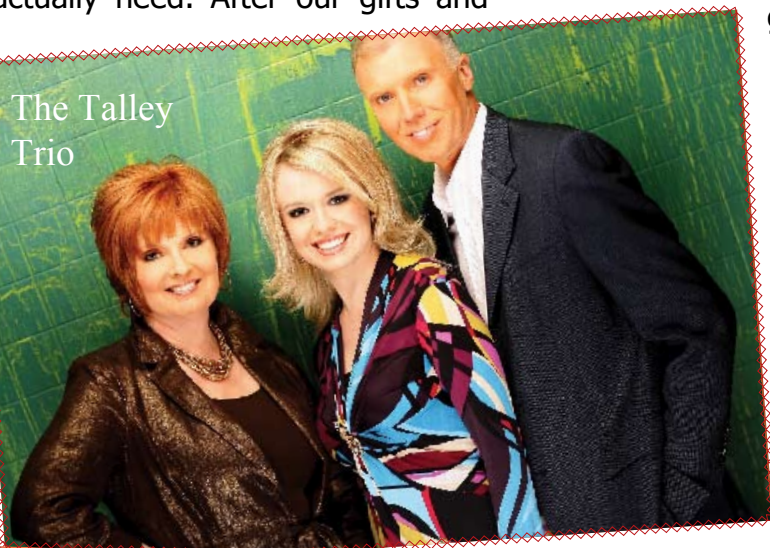
Josh Franks says he and his wife Ashley also try to take off during the Christmas holidays and spend time with family.

Casey Brandon of The Greesons shares his special plans for the season. "Years ago, my family use to go to Gatlinburg, Tennessee on the first weekend in December for the Christmas parade. We're thinking about starting that tradition back up again. Being able to be with my family at Christmas time has always been a special time."

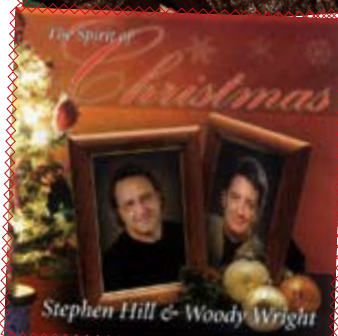
Providentials Quartet singer Joe Young, explains

*continues*

The Talley  
Trio



things, we sit down and eat. We enjoy just being at home, that's the best!"





## Mystery Men Quartet



that their group always takes time off in December to be with family. "This year is very special," says Young. "We are celebrating Christmas with our first two grandbabies Claire and Ben."

Some artists plan special concert events and Christmas programs. Woody Wright and Stephen Hill have been traveling overseas for six years with their Spirit of Christmas Tour. Their tour takes them to the Netherlands, Sweden and Norway before they return to North America to sing in several different States. Wright comments, "We will be tired puppies when we finally stop, but this is no doubt our most exciting and ambitious tour to date."

"The Mystery Men perform Christmas Concerts throughout the Christmas season beginning the first of December," says Jym Howe. "We call it The Mystery of Christmas Celebration."

The Capstone Quartet recorded its first Christmas CD this year and performing

several Capstone Christmas Concerts. Bob Sellers shares, "I am looking as forward to it as anything we've ever done, simply because Christmas is without a doubt my favorite time of year."

"I am excited about doing my annual Christmas Concert in Sylvania, Ohio on Dec 6th," says soloist Sheri Lafontaine. "I'm from Toledo, so it's kind of a homecoming for me. Complete with a children's choir, scenery and multiple actors, it's more like a Branson show."

John Starnes will be traveling north this December. He comments, "I have two Christmas Choral concerts planned. They are both up in Canada and last for three and four nights each." Mercy's Well is going north as well, but not quite as far as Starnes. "We are doing our annual Christmas Tour this year, which will encompass about six stops. One is in Indiana and we are excited to be up there," remarks Greg Gainer.

A relative newcomer to Southern Gospel, Dustin

Bradshaw of State of Grace comments, "My group has been singing for about a year and a half now, and we have never been asked to do a Christmas concert until this year. We are going to do our first one on December 13th, 2009. We will be performing songs like "Mary Did You Know?" and "Christmas Shoes," as well as old favorites such as "Silent Night" and "Hark The Herald Angels Sing."

Barry Shadrix of The Shadrix Trio shares that his group will be quite busy during the season. "We will be hosting our 4th Annual "Smoky Mountain Weekend Getaway" in Pigeon Forge, Tennessee on December 4-6. We always have a blast! We are also doing a mini-Christmas tour on December 12 and 13 with JP Miller." The group has also been in the studio in November working on a new project that they hope to



Shadrix Trio



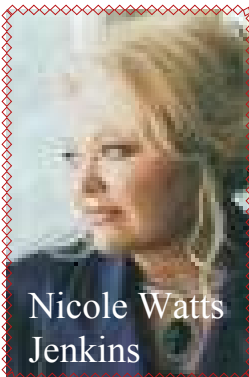


release by the first of the year.

Also working on a new project over the Christmas season is Nicole Watts Jenkins. Formerly with the Perrys, Jenkins is currently a Worship Pastor as well as a soloist and will be recording a new praise and worship project in December.

Across the ocean, Johnmark Grant is a southern gospel singer who travels with his family group throughout the United Kingdom.

Johnmark also has a solo ministry and is quite busy with his travels and The Family Grant. Christmas is a special time and Grant wrote a song in 2001 that he performs during the holiday season. "Are You

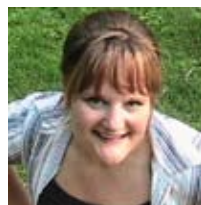


Nicole Watts Jenkins

Ready?" is a Christmas song with an evangelical message.

"Last Christmas I was thinking about what Jesus means to me, how He came into this world to save a wretch like me. He was born in a manger, not in a five star hotel; He came seeking the lost, and to save our souls from Hell. Are you ready for that day my brother? He's coming mighty soon. Are you ready for that day my sister? Could be morning, night or noon. Are you ready for that day my friend? Will you abide to the very end? You never know He might just come today." (Johnmark Grant © Grants Music)

Christmas is a special time for all Christians as we celebrate the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ. As the artists take time to be with family or with the family God singing their songs, they will be preparing once again to resume their busy travel schedules in the New Year. We wish each artist and each reader a very blessed Christmas season.



*Born and raised in southern Ontario, Canada, Lorraine Walker has been interested and involved in Southern Gospel Music since the mid-80's. Since 2005, she has also authored the popular 'Reality Check' column and other features for [www.sgmradio.com](http://www.sgmradio.com).*

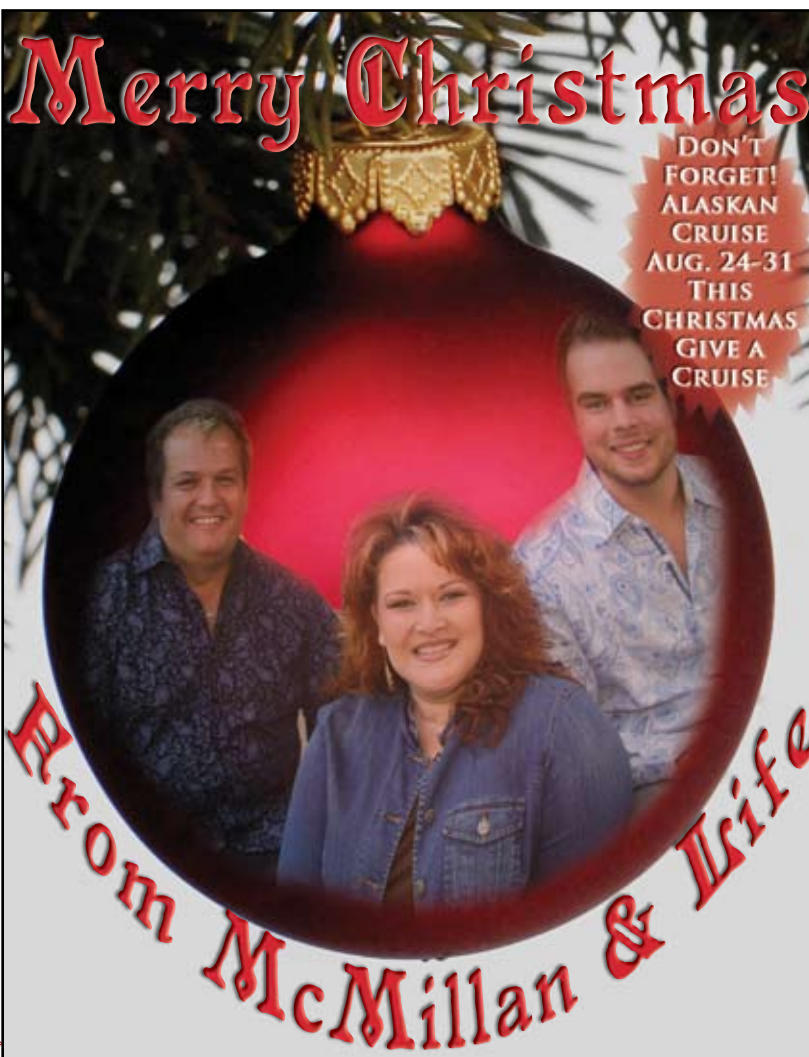
## Singing at Jerry Falwell's Church & University

First Person Account by  
Christy Sutherland

I have the privilege of singing at lots of wonderful places. Recently, I was invited to sing at Thomas Road Baptist Church and Liberty University, both founded by the legendary Dr. Jerry Falwell. What an honor to get to be a part of what God is doing at that church and on that campus! The first thing I noticed about the church and the campus is a spirit of excellence. Everything was top notch. The school even has a year round ski slope! The church is beautiful as well. Pastor Jonathon Falwell does a great job of keeping everything running smoothly at the mega church, while still remaining humble and so approachable. He was so kind to me and my husband/manager Matt Dudney. I sang at their televised morning services and then did a mini-concert that evening. Worship leader Charles Billingsley's right-hand man Callie Penn was assigned to take care of me and Matt and he did! Every time we turned around, Callie was there to make sure we had everything we needed. Charles Billingsley was awesome. Such an incredibly talented man, yet so down to earth. He went to dinner with us after my concert Sunday night and sat and visited with us over onion rings and burgers.

Chancellor Jerry Falwell Jr. and his wife Becky met us for lunch the next day. Once again, I was taken back by the friendliness and approachability of these leaders.

continues>







Christy singing at Thomas Road Baptist Church

They sat as though they had all the time in the world to spend with us (and I know they didn't!) You could sense they have a true heart for the students at Liberty, not only for their academic growth, but for their spiritual growth as well.

The man who invited me to sing at Thomas Road Baptist and at Lib-

erty University was lifelong friend of Dr. Jerry Falwell, Harold Knowles. He and his wife Anna took me and Matt under their wing and made sure we always had dinner plans! Harold works for the University in fundraising. We fell in love with him and his wife. Because Harold and the late Dr. Falwell grew up together, Harold had lots of good stories to share!

Singing at Liberty University's convocation was amazing. Nearly 9000 students were led in praise and worship by their peers at the beginning of the service. Matt and I were blown away to see thousands of kids with their hands raised, praising Jesus. I sang my song "Somebody Died For Me" just before Dr.

Tim Clinton spoke. He was wonderful. He is truly an extension of Christ's mercy to a hurting world. The presence of the Lord was like electricity in that sports arena.

Matt and I travel across the United States ministering and sharing God's peace, love and blessings with others. Sometimes though, we are the ones who get blessed. I know Dr. Falwell would be very proud of the way both of his sons are carrying on his legacy. I can't wait to go back!



Christy Sutherland is a Christian singer, songwriter, and vocal coach. She is pictured here with husband Matt

Dudney with Pastor Jonathan Falwell from Thomas Road Baptist Church, Lynchburg, VA. Visit [www.christysutherland.net](http://www.christysutherland.net)

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this ministry. See you on  
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in 2010!*

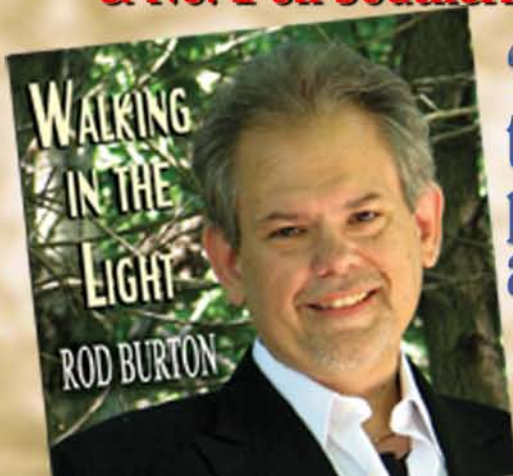


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to yours:  
May you know the love and  
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*'That's what  
Christmas  
is all about,  
Charlie Brown.'*


One of the mainstream's most popular proclamations of the gospel came to mind as the stories and testimonies started pouring in for this issue. Most commonly, the Christmas celebrations of believers in Christ focus on the bigness of the holiday's miracles – the virgin birth, the guiding star, the hosts of angels, and most importantly, God Himself coming to earth as a vulnerable child.

Our focus here, with our December issue's theme, "The Gift of a Second Chance," is the bridge God made by sending Jesus. We know that He came to save us all... we specifically want to celebrate and share how He has individually ministered in the lives of some of gospel music's wonderful artists and friends, lives that have forever been changed by grace, renewal, healing, redemption... a second chance.

We believe that's what Christmas is all about – and we hope you will be inspired by the gift of Jesus, who embodies love that is greater than anything.

*The Gift of a Second Chance*





If you think you will never find love again,  
that you are not worthy:  
wait on the Lord.  
Find strength in the Word, prayer, and church.  
Seek ye first the Kingdom of God.  
If it seems hopeless,  
that you've lost your chance,  
seek the face of Jesus.  
Get as close as you can.  
He will give you your desires!  
- Sonya Isaacs

She made a list.  
She prayed over it much more than twice.  
This Christmas, Sonya Isaacs and her new  
husband Jimmy Yearly begin a new life together:

## *The Gift of a Second Chance: at love, marriage, & ministry*

By Kelly Capriotti Burton

To see Sonya Isaacs on stage – playing the mandolin as quickly and precisely as lightning striking, singing with a bluegrass-angel voice that cannot be duplicated, sparkling with glamour and more so with the love of Jesus – you'd imagine life must be easy for her. But to talk to her at the product table, on the way to the bus, or during a Saturday morning on her way for a family visit, she is very open about the journey she's taken through post-divorce healing and her desire to find love again. She is also very adamant to give God the glory and let you, Reader, know that He answers our most precious prayers.

I was a fan of Sonya's just a few months before I met her for the first time, and knowing the talent she holds for writing, playing, singing, and

charming, I was astonished by her accessibility. She is open about her fondness for little old people and little kids, and they are just among the few who flock to her to share their own stories as well as their prayers for her.

When Sonya announced her engagement via The Isaacs official website in September, she began by writing, "I am very excited to announce that I am getting MARRIED!!! Many of you have been praying for this for years, and I just want to say thank you... God is so faithful!!" The heart expressed there is one who cares about her fans and road friends enough to include them in her personal accomplishments and dreams, and it's the same one I was privileged to speak to – on speaker phone as she and new fiancé Jimmy Yearly drove to visit his aunt.

### The Road After Divorce

Clear is the fact that divorce holds a stigma for those who make their life and living in gospel music. For some artists in the spotlight, the announcement of a new marriage can be tricky. Sonya sees it as a new way to minister.

"It is always difficult to go through a divorce," she says. "For me, because my ex-husband was involved our ministry, it was really hard. Sometimes I was put on a pedestal and expected to be flawless, so going through the pain of [the divorce] brought a level of separation from God.

"I felt like I had disappointed Him so much," she continues. "Regardless of the fault of a divorce, marriage is supposed to be forever. I think part of the reason God hates divorce is because of the way it makes us feel."

Sonya has been transparent in her walk through life and love since that time. She found herself diving into scripture for guidance and comfort, though part of her saw her dreams slipping away.

"At age 35, all I wanted was to be a mother," she

shares. "The older I got, the more worried I was [about that never happening]."

It took her years to pray through, she says, and to discover and accept that, "God wants us to have all His blessings and to have second chances. He wants us to know that we are His children."

She continues, "He has completely restored my heart, healed and cleansed me."

Sonya believes that though the stigma and pain of divorce is difficult to overcome, those going through it must forgive themselves.

"God's mercy and grace takes complete surrender," she says. "I don't mean we are supposed to take advantage of His love, but we deserve His love because He wants to give it to us! He wants us to feel like His children!"

Once reaching that place of acceptance, Sonya dated throughout the past several years, even finding herself in a few serious relationships. But she never felt at peace about moving on to marriage.

"People I met along the road told me to pray," she recalls. "I prayed for years for God to let me find someone who would be supportive of my family, to love me for who I am, to be a soul mate and companion."

And then, she got specific:

"I made a list several times," Sonya laughs. "I got specific: I wanted him to be taller than me, someone who could write songs with me, who was athletic, who wouldn't mind that I sing and travel. I asked for him to be funny, to have dark hair and blue eyes, and to love God more than anything."

When she met Jimmy Yearly in June of this year,



*'I was told the Lord was fixing someone for me.'*

*All photos courtesy of Sonya Isaacs*

**continues>**



continued&gt;



she saw that he met every desire.

### The Fulfillment of a Prophecy

"As I waited for that soul mate, I stayed close to God in the Word," Sonya says. "By prophetic means, I was told that the Lord was fixing someone for me."

That detail turned out to be accurate and true. As Sonya was looking to God for patience and guidance, Jimmy was going through his own journey toward a new chance. He grew up in gospel music, singing with The Yearly Family – who happened to spend about a year singing on the same Beattyville, Kentucky gospel TV show as The Isaacs. (Jimmy remembers this experience; Sonya does not!)

As a teenager, Jimmy ran from God, Sonya shares, and pursued a more reckless lifestyle of drinking and singing in clubs. He was also previously married and divorced. Four years ago, he gave his life back to Christ.

"So when I was told that God was fixing someone for me, it was so true!" Sonya says. "Jimmy was the one."

The two met during a writing session for Disney this past June. They were engaged in September and will be married on December 20. They also, Sonya shares, hope to have children right away.

"I am 35 and Jimmy is 39," she says. "We know that this is right so we don't want to wait!"

### The Beauty from the Scraps

Sonya and I talked about a song from The Isaacs 2007 release, *Big Sky*. "I Bring It to You" speaks of God making beauty of the "scraps" that make up our souls, the mistakes of our past.

"That song is fitting," Sonya says. "It would be easy to pick up our accolades and be arrogant, but we are

to pick up the pieces and lay them at the foot of the cross and give them to God."

As Sonya and Jimmy prepare for life together, they agree that a ministry together is likely in store as well.

"I am not planning to leave the family," Sonya reassures, referring, of course, to her award-winning family group The Isaacs, who just took the Billboard Bluegrass chart, the NQC main stage, and many others by storm with their new release, *Naturally...* an almost a capella collection, filled with the unique and tight family harmonies and twisted-classic sounds that have made them legendary.

Sonya does, however, see opportunities that open because of her marriage to Jimmy. He is touring as the lead singer for country music's Shenandoah about 80 dates a year. When not on the road with them, he will be with The Isaacs as often as possible.

"When we sing together, it's magical," Sonya says. "I've felt in my spirit for a longtime that God will use me in other ways besides singing and playing...we're just going to wait and see!"

In the mean time, Jimmy has been asked to speak at a church retreat with The Isaacs providing the music, and Sonya and Jimmy have been asked to sing together for a Valentine's banquet. Sonya believes, "God can us better together as one that as two separately; a twofold cord is harder to break!"

The burning question that remains, for me at least, was: Will Sonya and Jimmy sing at their wedding?

Sonya laughed, "We haven't gotten that far yet! I'm just meeting with the florist today." (We spoke with less than one month to go until their December 20 wedding).

Sonya and Jimmy will be keeping their nuptial celebration small, simple, and personal. I will be held in downtown Nashville, will involve the Isaacs family in some capacity, and will likely involve a surprise singer or two, Sonya teases. Highlights will be available in January, both on the Isaacs' website and here in Scoops.

"My prayer now is that God will use us as a team to uplift His kingdom," Sonya shares. "I always knew God would come through on His promises, but having Jimmy brought to me has solidified my faith. God has shown me favor by meeting my needs and wants."

She concludes, "My faith is stronger, and I feel so loved by God. He confirms in our spirits: if we wait and are patient, He will come through." Amen.

If you ask around in Christian circles, you'd find a common thread when it comes to labeling sin. Sure, the Bible teaches us that sin is all the same in God's eyes, but there are certainly some that make us more squeamish, and at times, more likely to judge. Enter: the A word. (well, one of the A words). The topic of abortion is a hot button in our American society like no other.

Perhaps that is why it was with another A-word, awe, that I encountered Adam and Kathy Glover. Their testimony of post-abortion healing has been made public by the unique ministry they have honed and by their transparency in sharing it with Singing News earlier this year. At the 2009 National Quartet Convention, they were even granted permission to share their story during the Artist Spotlight Showcase in which they sang. There is no being subtle or hiding the nuances of their past and what God has brought them through, and the Glovers are determined to use a topic many people would like to

avoid to reach a deep hurt in the church that has long gone unaddressed.

### Turning Points

To see Adam and Kathy Glover off the platform is to see a picture you might encounter on a TLC reality show: a man and woman clearly adoring of each other, tired, laughing, and both bewildered and used to the chaos that comes with having five children ranging in age from infant to teenager and traveling with them full time for their ministry. (Their children are Shelby - 13, Justin - 12, Carter - 5, Briley - 1 ½, and Gracelyn, 6 months).

But remarkable as their family seems - and their strength and cheerfulness amidst their frenzied circumstances - what is most remarkable about the Glovers is their candid, sincere, striking testimony. Having been singing southern gospel music together for several years, they reached a critical turning point while working on their second CD.

"We'd been married for nine years

and had two of our children," Kathy recalls. "We were in church every Sunday, everything was great, we had the plastic smile on our faces, and our marriage was falling apart.

"It was," she continued, "Because of what we had in our past. I knew I finally had to tell my husband, and I believed at that time that he would leave me."

Kathy called their producer to warn him that she was going to have a conversation with Adam, and that it might be the end of their marriage and their ministry. She then made arrangements for the children and took Adam to a baseball field that night to talk.

"I didn't even want to talk about it in my own house. [The multiple abortions in my past are] just that deep and that dark. It took me forever to get it out and when I finally

[continues>](#)

# The Glovers: A second chance ministry after the pain of abortion

By Kelly Capriotti Burton



Publicity Photo



continued>

did, he told me he had multiple abortions in his past, which just blew my mind."

The couple believes that their tumultuous pasts are part of a higher calling. "God purposely put the two of us together to make a difference in the lives of men and women affected by abortion" Kathy says.

While The Glovers have seen much industry-level success – consistent charting of their songs, invitations to NQC showcases, and award nominations, they now see a transition happening in their ministry. They have spent the last two years speaking and singing at the annual fundraisers of pregnancy crisis centers. Adam says they believe the family group's future will include more of those engagements, along with ministering at

Politicians will say a young girl shouldn't have to pay the rest of her life for a mistake she makes, referring to a baby. That makes no sense to me.

- Adam Glover Turmoil and Healing

churches during weekends. When I spoke to the Glovers mid-week during National Quartet Convention, their booth had already been visited by six such crisis centers to book dates.

A glance at feedback to The Glovers via their online guestbook and Facebook makes it evident that their story of grace after a traditionally controversial topic does not



The adventurous spirit of the Glover family is captured here in their latest photo shoot by Amber Butler Photography.

limit their ministry at all. Comments range from "Thanks for worshiping with us" to "We will continually pray for your ministry."

Ambassadors Speakers Bureau, the oldest and most established Christian-based talent agency in the United States and who represents popular Christian personalities such as Rick Warren and William Paul Young (author of *The Shack*), has added The Glovers to its roster, which will open up untold future doors for their testimony to be shared.

Though abortion remains a sensitive, sometimes taboo topic in churches, Adam and Kathy have not dealt with adversity or backlash from the church or gospel music community. They have, however, faced what Kathy says is, "spiritual warfare, and it's has been really bad to stop what we are doing."

What they are doing is bringing awareness to the healing necessary for Christians who have had abor-

tions in their past.

"A lot of people are blind or don't want to deal with it," Kathy says. "Pastors say they don't have people in their churches who have had abortions – but they're there, they just don't want to talk about it."

She and Adam use a tangible symbol of healing in their services. Those who come to the altar are encouraged to drop a rock into a bucket as a sign of letting go of something that has been holding them back. The Glovers have already seen many striking examples of this during the church services in which they minister:

- A woman spoke to them between morning services to confess she had once forced her 16-year-old daughter to abort her baby. The daughter was older and getting ready to be married, and the mother knew, though they'd never spoken of it, that it was still causing her daughter to suffer. She called the daughter, had her come to the second service, and Kathy re-

calls seeing "the healing that took place between them."

- An 85-year-old woman came to the altar and shared that she had had an abortion – 58 years before – and had never told a single person. She was shaking as she spoke, and said she was finally able to let it go.

"It is not just teenagers or women in their 20s, but mothers, pastors who have forced their daughters, people in church ministry trying not to let it interrupt their lives – so many in these categories affected by abortion," Kathy says. "It's not just in the world but in the church, and it's a big secret."

The secret was a difficult one for Adam and Kathy to share at first, but they have pressed on to continue in this vein of ministry. Recently, Kathy and Zane King co-wrote the song, "Saving My Life," which coincides with the post-abortion testimony.

The first time they shared the testimony was at a Valentine's banquet at their own church, which Adam describes as "big, Baptist, and about as conservative as you can get." That broke the ice for their unique ministry. "When we shared this at the [NQC Artist Spotlight] showcase," Adam says, "All eyes and ears were on us, and we felt tremendous support."

Adam notes the spiritual turmoil evident in the churches where they minister, often because those with abortion in their past have hidden it.

"When Kathy and I went through that, we didn't even have the concept of it being wrong," he tells. "Our biggest fear was telling our parents [about the pregnancies]. [Our concern was not] that abortion was biblically or ethically or emotionally or spiritually wrong... it was an option."

Not much has changed since that time, Adam notes: "The world will give you an option. Politicians will say a young girl shouldn't have to pay the rest of her life for a mistake she makes, referring to a baby. That makes no sense to me."

With 1.2 million abortions having been performed in the United States in 2008 (according to Planned Parenthood), there is no doubt a need for counsel, comfort, and ultimately, a road to healing through Christ for those left in its wake. The Glovers are passionately, painstakingly, and bravely forging that road through music, ministry, and compassion.

Coming in January: The Glovers, a ministry family of 7 on the road...!



ON THE ROAD

Join Ken and Jean Grady and their guests for southern gospel news, concert updates and much more on the internet at [www.gospelmusictoday.com](http://www.gospelmusictoday.com)

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With warm appreciation to our readers from SGN Scoops.

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chances'



**When Kelly told me the theme of this month's edition, gratefulness for my own "Gift of a Second Chance" began to swell in my heart. After turning my back on my Christian upbringing, God graciously cleansed and restored my repentant heart and then gifted me with the ability to write a song about the experience. I believe gifts are meant to be shared, and it's with much joy I am sharing my testimony in song with the Readers of Scoops Magazine. - Rhonda**

The Roarks have a testimony filled with second chances...healing, rescue, and to hear patriarch Paul Roark tell it, significant times of testing in life in which God wanted to make sure his priorities were in the right place. To see the blessings that have come to and through this family, one can have faith that God honors obedience.

Sonshine Group, run by The Roarks, is holding its three Christmas in the Smokies events right now in Pigeon Forge, Tennessee. There is a notable absence there, but another amazing testimony of a second chance:

On Tuesday, November 24, Paul suffered a heart attack while in Kettering, Ohio. The initial news was not hopeful: Paul needed a bypass surgery and doctors did not believe his heart was strong enough to withstand the procedure. Paul's son Travis helped spread the word via Facebook, and friends of the Roarks from all over began to pray.

A few days later, additional scans showed the damage was not as extensive as initially believed. Paul was scheduled for surgery, and he is now recovering after a successful triple bypass.

A testament to the heart of the Roark family, the Christmas in the Smokies events went on as planned. Travis and brother Shane stayed with their dad through surgery and got to the event the next day. On Wednesday, December 2, while Shane sang solo, his mom Jetta placed a call and asked to address the audience from the phone:

"I just want to thank everyone for their prayers," she said. "If not for that, Paul wouldn't be here right now."

Everyone in the auditorium applauded, and then they were on their feet as Shane sang a stirring song he penned, "There is a God."



Paul Roark's  
Latest 2nd Chance

Above: Shane Roark performs at Christmas in the Smokies 2009.

Right: Jetta, Travis, Shane, and Paul comprise The Roarks.

## The Shireys take a faith walk toward second chances

God's timing is not always our timing. We go through phases in our lives to bring us to where God would have us to be. Wayne and I have owned a furniture store in Lexington, South Carolina for 30 years and this past August, God let us know that NOW is the time to let it go. (Very scary!)

The store has many times supported our singing habit. We have traveled in the ministry together for 30 years singing for the Lord. God gave us two beautiful daughters to help us forward what He has called us to do. Never knowing where it would take us, we just did what we have always done. God has taught us many things in the past year as we have prayed and fasted for answers concerning our move to Tennessee. Finally, we knew this was where God wanted us at this time in our lives so in March, this year, we made the move... another scary adventure, but God ordained it.

To look back now at where God has brought us from and what He has done in our family simply humbles and amazes me. Ten years ago, the devil decided to stop what God had begun through attacking our fami-



ly. Things crept in and almost destroyed mine and Wayne's relationship. The devil tried to tell me in these horrible, trying times that our ministry was finished and that we would never be able to sing again because of what Satan was trying to accomplish, but I am here today writing a testimony of what God can do if we just hold on to His unchanging hand.

God healed our relationship and made it better than ever and gave us back love to share at home and to the people with our precious fami-

ily. He is truly a God of Second Chances. We praise Him for what he has done for us and look forward to great and mighty things that He has in store for the ministry of The Shireys in the future. We are standing ready to do whatever He wants us to do and go wherever He wants us to go!

What a wonderful blessing to be able to stand on stage with my family and know that we are a MIRACLE THAT HAS PROVEN TRUE for anyone who might think they are over. Your works for God are not over until you breathe your last breath. Be encouraged and be led by Him and I promise that God will be faithful to !

*We love you.. Darlene, The Shireys.*



### Shay & Michi Guess: *Using a second chance to spread joy through hope*

By Evie  
Hawkins

From Mantachie, MS, Shay & Michi Guess are continuing to spread their encouragement and inspiring story to the world. Michi's vocals portray her passion, and a story that moves her audiences. Losing her adoptive father and being on her own at age 16, is only a starting point of her heart-wrenching story. Teaming with her husband, Shay, and his writing skills and musical gifts, the pair has created an inspiring program of hope, inspiration, and heartfelt passion that they carry to churches and

conferences everywhere. Shay Guess has established himself as a compassionate and caring artist who is willing to reach out with his words of encouragement, not just to these music venues, but to people of all walks of life. Be watching for more news on Shay & Michi Guess as they continue spreading their joy and the Gospel through their unique program and God-given talents.

Check out Shay & Michi Guess at [www.reverbNation.com/shaymichiguess](http://www.reverbNation.com/shaymichiguess) and [www.myspace.com/shaymichi](http://www.myspace.com/shaymichi)



## 2nd generation, 2nd chance



"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." Jeremiah 29:11

I had my life all planned out. I thought I had it all: a husband whom I loved, two wonderful sons, grandbabies, beautiful house...a picture of the "perfect" family. At least for thirty one years I felt that way. Then in 2005 my life took a turn I never expected or seen coming. My husband of 31 years began to feel like he didn't want to be married anymore. How could this be happening to me, to us? We had both been actively involved in many ministries with our pastors. Not only that but, my sister, brother and I had begun traveling as a southern gospel trio, 2nd Generation. God was moving in our services and blessing this ministry.

For the next year I fought to hang on to my marriage and my position with the ministry. Finally in March 2006 my husband of 32 years filed for divorce against my wishes.

Many times during that year the enemy fought me hard, bringing doubt and guilt into my thoughts. Doing his best to lead me to believe that God couldn't use me that I had the "scarlet" letter D pinned to my chest! I prayed and waited on God to move in my situation, to basically put my life back together. I knew that there was a call of God on my life, I knew that I was anointed to bring the good news of Jesus through song, but, many times in the quiet of the night when I was alone, I would cry out to God, "Why?" Why was this happening to me?

It wasn't until I completely laid it all at His feet that I began to see a new plan unfolding in my life. I had prayed and told God that He knew the plan for my life. He could see my future and what was ahead for me. I also asked Him that if there was someone that would love me for who I am and for what I believe in then I would be open to that. But, first and foremost, he had to be a man of God, someone that understood ministry and would love the ministry that I was involved in. I was asking God for a second chance at love and happiness.

That's where Les comes in. 2nd Generation had been going to Oak Grove, Arkansas for concerts at a little country church, Boyd Church of God. The pastor was Les Robinson. His wife had passed away several years before. Neither Les nor I was looking for love or relationship. But God had another plan. Les had also been praying that if there was another love for him that God would have to send her to him and that she needed to understand

ministry and to love God and to love him for who he was and what he believed in. Les went on a cruise with 2nd Generation in March of 2009 and as Brenda [Denney], my sister, says, it turned into the "Love Boat!"

Les and I were falling in love. We neither one seen it coming but truly feel that God caused our paths to cross. He had seen the heartache, disappointments and the loss that we both had experienced. He also knew that what each of us needed was each other. On July 17, 2009, Les gave me the most beautiful engagement ring in front of approximately 500 people at the opening of the Friday night concert at the Branson Gospel Music Convention. Did I mention that July 17 was also my birthday?

I am so thankful for the second chance at love and happiness that God blessed Les and I with. I am truly so very happy and blessed! Les is the most wonderful, considerate and sensitive man I have ever known. He is very supportive of our ministry, 2nd Generation. When he isn't able to attend our concerts, I know he is at home praying for the ministry. I am so thankful that I didn't rush God and allowed Him to work things out in His timing, not mine. There isn't enough space for me to write about all the wonderful blessings God has given me in my life, the most recent being Pastor Les Robinson from Oak Grove, Arkansas. By the way, Les and I were married September 26, 2009 surrounded by our children, grandchildren, friends, and family, who are also excited about our second chance at love. He truly is a God of second chances!

*Elaine Robinson with her sister Brenda Denney and friend Jimmy Hoskins make up 2nd Generation, now based in Oak Grove, Arkansas. Visit them at [www.2ndgenerationministries.com](http://www.2ndgenerationministries.com)*



# A second chance before a first breath: The adve

Emme Blu Bunch was born on January 13th, 2009. It's a day I will never forget and will cherish forever. She was a very healthy 9 lbs 13 oz and 21 inches long. All Mommy's and Daddy's know the feeling of a new baby, but nothing can describe the feeling when you see the first glimpse of your little one.

Five months before Emme was born, Shannon and I went in for the routine "big ultrasound." It was so overwhelming to see ten fingers, ten toes, a beating heart, and so many other little attributes. We were so excited to find out that we were having a little girl. We had her beautiful yet unique name already picked out and were ready to buy tons of pink and purple. A week later, Shannon was attending the National Quartet Convention and I had a follow up appointment to see the results of the ultrasound. This was the first appointment that Shannon would not be in attendance, but neither of us thought anything about it. As I sat down to speak with the doctor, I noticed there was a post-it note on my folder. I knew then, something was wrong.

As the appointment continued, the doctor told me that our daughter would most likely be born with Down Syndrome. I was devastated. I immediately called Shannon and told him the news. He was devastated. I thought, "Lord why me?" Shannon had to sing the following day at the convention and he told me that he would just cancel and come home to be with me. I told him not to, that God needed his message to be heard. The next day was challenging for him. His song selection (which was sent in prior to our news) included "How Great Thou Art." Could he sing that and mean it. As he sat in his hotel room that morning, he heard God speak. "Shannon, this won't be your last battle. Can you sing this and mean it? I'm here, I'm always here." He did sing "How Great Though Art" and he did mean it. He received a standing ovation, and God's work was done.

Meanwhile, my doctor made an appointment for us to see a genetic specialist. We went to the specialist and he asked us "If this baby has Down Syndrome, are you going to keep it?" We said without a thought, "Absolutely!" All children are a gift of God, and all



children are special, regardless of their genetic make-up. After another ultrasound, the doctor was certain that the baby had DS, but wanted to do an amniocentesis to make certain. We had it done, and 10 days later, we were told our baby was perfectly normal! Praise the Lord!

When Emme was born at 9:07 p.m. on January 13th, she was perfect, but her head was a little misshapen. Both Shannon and I recognized it, but we weren't concerned. At her first doctor's appointment, the pediatrician said it was something we would watch, but not to get too concerned. At her two month appointment, he referred us to Vanderbilt for a CT Scan. The results came back perfectly normal, but our doctor wasn't satisfied. He sent us on to a specialist at Vander-



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# ntures of little Emme Blu Bunch

bilt to check out his concern. Sure enough, he was right. The radiologist had read the CT Scan wrong and Emme was diagnosed with Metopic Craniosynostosis. This means that her frontal plates on her skull were prematurely fused together and she was left with very little soft spot. Without an extensive surgery, her little brain would have no room to grow and she would suffer physically, mentally, and cognitively. We knew, God was in control. We also knew what God meant we he spoke to Shannon and said this wouldn't be our last battle.

On June 23rd, 2009 Emme went in for surgery. It was a 6-7 hour surgery, but her doctor's finished in 4 1/2 hours. We couldn't wait to see our little girl. She was swollen and bandaged so tight that we couldn't recognize her. The following morning her eyes were swollen shut. They stayed swollen shut for 5 excruciating days. On the 3rd day we were finally allowed to hold her. It was bittersweet because her eyes were yet to open. Did she know it was Mommy and Daddy? How was she feeling? My heart ached on the inside, but on

the outside I put up a very brave front. Words cannot describe how

great I felt to see her eyes open on the 5th day. We spent 6 days in PICU and 1 day in a regular room at Vanderbilt. On the 8th day, we were finally allowed to come home.

I write all this to tell you; sometimes our second chance is not what we picture. For me, my second chance was giving it to God and letting him work me through the challenge. Today we have a happy, healthy, outgoing 10 month old that shows no signs of surgery what so ever. She's even more beautiful today, than she was the first day. God guides us through the valley. If we stop long enough to breathe in the valley, we might smell the pretty lilies that bloom there, see the greenest grass that grows there, and rest by the calm, still waters that flow there. For it's in the valley that God gives us the strength to rest and recoup. Please visit us at [www.shannonbunch.com](http://www.shannonbunch.com) to find out more about our ministry and see a video capturing Emme's entire story. Until then, we love you Bunches!

- *Melissa Bunch*



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# Debbie Bennett: Giving and receiving second chances

By Kelly Capriotti Burton

Most fans of southern gospel music are familiar with the heart-breaking story of one of its greatest musicians. Roger Bennett, whom audiences loved as part of The Cathedrals and then Legacy 5, whose testimony of perseverance through cancer touched many as it became another facet of his ministry.

But like many gospel wives, the story of Debbie Bennett is a little less familiar, unless you are one of the readers who have kept checking in on "Midnight Meditations," the blog Roger kept through his cancer treatments (<http://roger-bennett.typepad.com>). Debbie has kept the blog going since Roger went home in March of 2007, and there, in ways subtle and often uncelebrated, she has repeatedly told the story of second chances, of how Roger's sickness and passing has led her to new places.

On November 14, Debbie began living another second chance when she was married to J.B. Savage, a general contractor from East Tennessee. She has known him for

over a year, and he has moved to middle Tennessee to be with Debbie.

"It's such a blessing

to find happiness again," Debbie says. "People everywhere have shown me love, support, and encouragement."

Debbie and J.B. are looking forward to their wedding trip – a cruise leaving from New Orleans. The happiness is evident as she says, "This is a different kind of excitement. Life is very different from where I thought it would be at this point, but it's exciting for sure!"

Though it seems Debbie is just beginning a new story, she has been helping others do the same for nearly two years as a stem cell/bone marrow transplant courier (see sidebar). As a volunteer courier, Debbie makes trips all over the United States, and potentially to other countries, to pick up donated cells and bring them to transplant centers, where patients await much in the way Roger did a few short years ago.

"Roger had three transplants," Debbie recalls. "We spent most of his last years living in Houston so

that we could be near the treatment center. We had to be there for about six months after each of the transplants, and then for weekly and biweekly visits thereafter. That meant that a lot of time was spent in the cancer community."

Which also meant that Debbie became friends with those in health care administration and nursing, and she knew that at some point, she would want to volunteer some-



## Debbie's personal message to you

"God has been so faithful in my life. When I was younger, I had my life 'all planned out', or so I thought. I have learned throughout the years, that my plans are most often NOT God's plans. Again, when I was younger, I stressed a lot about the changes that life dealt me. As I have matured, I have learned that, no matter what plans God has in our lives, it is good to know that He is in control. As Roger was fond of saying, 'God is never surprised by our circumstances.' One day, we will look back and see the hand of God through it all. It may be a struggle while we go through some of the circumstances of life, but if we have that assurance that God already knows how it will turn out - He has always had a plan for our lives - then it is much easier to accept. Romans 8:28 promises us that 'All things work together for good to those who love God, and are called according to His purpose.' So, no matter what those 'things' may be, we know that He will cause good to come from them. I am blessed. I know He keeps me firmly 'In His Grip.'"



how in aiding other cancer patients and their families?

"During Roger's illness, we were blessed by others, such as [Legacy 5's] Scott Fowler, who set up a fund to cover what insurance would not. We were blessed to be able to give from the resources we had, but at that time, I was unable to physically give back to others."

After Roger's passing, Debbie went back to Houston and spoke with the coordinator of Roger's first transplant. It was then that Debbie discovered her new mission.

"It was like a rock hit me in the head: this is what I'm supposed to do!" she says.

"This" is serving as a volunteer for the National Marrow Donor's Program (see sidebar). Since completing her training in March 2008 - during the weekend of the first anniversary of Roger's passing, Debbie has made countless trips to transport cells for transplant.

"I made seven trips during the summer of 2008," she recalls, "But I've slowed down some since then."

Debbie notes the deeply personal aspects of this mission: "My job is to complete paperwork, get through the sometimes tricky security and transportation issues at airports, and get the cells to the



transplant center within 24 hours. The recipients of these transplants have had their systems wiped out by intense chemo, so timing is very

## About transplants & donors

Debbie clarifies that though Roger's father, Doug, was the donor for his first two stem cell transplants, a parent being a match for a child is "almost unheard of." Siblings are typically a patient's best hope for a match, and after that, "MUDs" – Matched Unrelated Donors, are searched for.

Roger's third transplant came from a MUD. Debbie says that because of this transplant from a stranger in Norway, one she will never meet, Roger received the precious gift of time to celebrate one last Christmas, mark his and Debbie's 25th wedding anniversary, and spend extra time with their children, Jordan and Chelsea.

"Volunteering [for the National Marrow Donor's Program] is a way for me to continue Roger's ministry and give back to the people who helped us," she says.

Debbie also wished to clarify that what Roger received were not a bone marrow transplants but stem cell transplants from live adult donors.

Finally, Debbie – and SGN Scoops – encourages you to register with the donor program at [BEAMATCH.org](http://BEAMATCH.org). This registry used a cheek swab to collect DNA and include donors in a registry database. By doing so, you may be called upon to save a life at no financial expense and little time or discomfort on your end.

Debbie adds, "There are a lot of selfless people out there willing to give people they don't know a second chance."

What a gift to give this Christmas!

More information:  
[www.BEAMATCH.org](http://www.BEAMATCH.org)

important."

Though Debbie does not meet any of the donors or recipients, she feels that is in line with her calling and strengths. "All my life I have been a behind-the-scenes person," she says. "But I do know how to pray for the people on both ends of this process."

As Debbie continues to work helping those affected by cancer, she also looks forward to life with her new husband and to

the plans being made by her adult children. Jordan will be getting married next June, and Chelsea is preparing for a missions trip to Po-

land. Debbie also plans to continue Roger's web store, work on some new projects, and will continue the blog he started until she feels the time for it has passed.

"Roger started that blog as a ministry of encouragement," she says. "We had no idea how blessed we would be by the comments of encouragement left there for us."

Debbie remains grounded and grateful amidst the dramatic changes she has undergone in the past two years.

"I don't think anything in my life stays stable for more than a week!" she said. "Sometimes life is not how we plan it, but God makes it work."

## Scoops writers share testimonies



### Jimmy McMillan: A life of second chances

I was so excited about being asked to take part in this article. My life is a series

of second chances and situations where the Lord has given me a "do-over." Looking back I am amazed at how He was directing so many situations that at

the time seemed to be the worst ever.

I was born the youngest of eight children more years ago than I am willing to admit. When I was four months old our mother was killed in a hit and run accident. Shortly after her death we were separated into

three groups and went to different homes. For my brother and me that meant another part of the country. I would not see any of my sisters again for sixteen years. For the next five years I lived with various aunts and at times with my father. One can imagine how confusing and at times scary this was for a child that age, and it was.

Here is where the second chance comes in. I had an aunt and uncle two thousand miles away who were praying for me this whole time. As they prayed, the Lord was preparing their hearts for what was to come. The week that I turned five my father told the family that he was needed someone else to give me a steady permanent home. Without a second thought my aunt and uncle said, "We will take him."

Soon I was on a plane to California to my new home with my new parents. My adoption was final within a couple months and we added "adoption day" to my list of days to celebrate. God took what satan meant for evil and made something good, allowing me to go from being a burden to being a "chosen child."

[continues>](#)

My story begins after my divorce of 1987. I had been married for almost 12 years, and had one son, Kreg Aaron.

After the divorce, my ex-wife and my son moved to North Carolina. Upon a personal visit to their home, I discovered that my son had 'adopted' the use of his mother's maiden

name as his on all his school records and other

documents, without my knowledge.

After much soul searching, prayer, and bouts of tears, I went to a lawyer, signing away all parental rights to him so that he could get a driver's license. You see, the state of North Carolina told him that he couldn't get a driver's license under his "adopted name" as it was on his

### Jerry Tinkle: A second chance from scratch

school records, but that it had to be in his "legal name." Though there is much more to tell about this story, my ex-wife had made it virtually impossible to maintain any type of relationship with my son since our divorce.

After much soul searching, prayer, and bouts of tears, I went to a lawyer, signing away all parental rights...

I liken it to the story in

the Bible where two women were fighting over custody of a child. The wise ruler, King Solomon, told them to split the child and give half to each. When told this, the birth mother said, "No, spare my son, give him to her!" which is how King Solomon knew who the real parent was. I couldn't see dragging my son through a court battle over his

name being changed. I preferred to let him keep her name, live a good, healthy life in my absence, and hope that someday he would return to me.

So, like Job, I lost my job, my house, my belongings, and my family. I had to literally start over from scratch.

I moved back to Indiana from Ohio and moved in with my mother. In a week I had two new part-time jobs. Six months later I secured my present position, working for the government at a veterans' hospital in Marion, Indiana, where I have been now for over 21 years.

I have not heard a word from my ex-wife or my son since I gave permission for him to legally change his name. I am hoping that someday

[continues>](#)



## Jimmy, continued

Fast forward I am now nineteen. I had dealt with sharp pains in my chest all my life. Everyone attributed these to "growing pains." Then in October of 1986 I suffered a heart attack.

After a myriad of tests the doctors discovered a congenital mass in my heart. I was scheduled for open heart surgery on a Friday in December. Two days before I was to have the operation I went to prayer meeting at my church.

I asked everyone to come

to the altar, lay hands on me, and anoint me with oil. (even though it was a southern Baptist church!)

That Friday I went for my final MRI. I lay in the machine for over four hours. When the workers finally pulled me out, they looked at me in amazement, telling me that the mass was nowhere to be found. They said, "We don't understand." I said, "I do: my Father took care of it, and me, one more time." I have never had another issue with my heart since that day.

Fast forward, I am 39. My marriage of 22 years fell apart and left me hurt, bitter, and all but destroyed. I said I would never love, trust, or especially marry

again. Guess what? – God had another plan.

At that point in time I was traveling with the Toney Brothers. One Sunday we had the evening off and they told me we were going to see the Lesters and their cousin Liz who was singing with them.

Well all I can say is I met her and suddenly I was not so sure being alone forever was the right choice. We met that day in July, I proposed that September at the NQC, and we were

married the following March.

Liz is the best thing

that has happened to me aside from my salvation... which for the record is the greatest second chance of my life. With Liz I have learned to love, hope, trust, and dream again.

Maybe you are alone and hurting right now. Maybe you have run so far from God you don't think there is hope. There is, my friend. Our heavenly Father is the God of the first, second, and third chance. When you are in the middle of heartache remember His words, "I know the plans I have for you, plans for good and not for evil, plans for a hope and for a future." (Jeremiah 29:11) There is hope, there is another chance.

## Jerry, continued

he will seek me out and try to develop a relationship with me once again.

In the meantime, again like Job, I have been given a second chance at life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

I have remarried to a wonderful woman named Debra. Debra has three children, and we now have three grandchildren from those children. Our life together is one of living daily by His grace, giving back our service to Him in all ways possible. My wife works for a Christian organization called IDES and I have served as a deacon at our church, Unity Christian Church in Marion, Indiana.

My life now is full, I have a great job, an outstanding home, and a remarkable new family. Like all families, we have had our ups and downs, but we have managed to stay together thru it all.

I now sing in a southern gospel quartet, The Minister's Quartet, and God has been richly blessing our ministry. I gave my heart back to the Lord by baptism in 1987, and have been living for Him ever since.

God is truly a God of second chances, and my likening myself to Job is not self-seeking or self-serving. It is a constant reminder to me that I

have been given a 'new life' through Jesus Christ, and God has blessed me because of my efforts to serve Him.

Please continue to pray, as I do, that someday my biological son will want to know me and redevelop a relationship with me that we had when he was quite young. I will never forget reading to him stories, using my 'voices' to portray the characters in each story I read to him. I will never forget teaching him to ride his bike down a long, wooded gravel path outside of a little Ohio town where we lived. And I will never, ever forget when he announced to me that he had been living as Kreg Aaron "Osborne" since moving to Charlotte, North Carolina. It tore my heart out to learn that, and to learn that he wanted to continue living that lie, without me in his life.

God is a loving God. He desires a relationship with each of His creations. It is up to us to reach out to Him and to seek His face. It is up to us to accept His gift of eternal life through Jesus Christ, His only son.

If your life seems like it has fallen apart through life circumstance, let Him put it back together as only He can. Give you life to the God of Second Chances today!

## A conversation with Sharron Kay King-Driver: Amazing years and second chances

*Sharron Kay King is as sincere and sweet in person as she is in song. While this chat was not the first time I talked to her, it was the most personal. May God bless her for her transparency.* - Kelly Capriotti Burton

*KCB: You've had an amazing year.*

SKK: The last two or three years actually, it's just been like a domino effect. I don't want it to end.

*KCB: In 2008 you won SGN Favorite Female...*

SKK: In '07 I won Favorite Female Vocalist and then in '08 I won Favorite Soloist. Then in '08 and '09 I was nominated for Favorite Horizon Individual for the Singing News Fan Awards. This year I made it into the top ten for favorite soloist for Singing News Fan Awards, and that, as a lot of people have told me, is just a mile marker for me.

*KCB: That's huge. You were sharing with a lot of top names.*

SKK: Janet Paschal, Squire Parsons, Jason Crabb... these were other names in the top ten. I think in the top five were Charlotte Ritchie, Janet Paschal, Ivan Parker, and I think Mark Bishop. But I got into the top ten and that was so unexpected because I never won the Horizon Award. I got in the top five nominees last year, and I got to sit down there with all the big names in front of the stage. I was sitting there when they were getting ready to open up the envelope for Horizon Individual and I'm praying, "Lord please don't let it be me because I'm afraid I'll puke!"

*KCB: One of the first things I noticed about you last year was your picture everywhere: your marketing was fantastic. But we know it's more than that. Pictures and ads in a magazine aren't what get the fans behind you.*

SKK: No, it's not what makes your ministry. From what people have been telling me, they like that I'm real and that I'm the same each time they come to hear me. I don't pretend to be something I'm not. If I mess up, I mess up. We're human and I think in this industry, even myself, I've noticed that stage presence isn't always the personal presence. I don't ever want to be that. If I can't bring who God made me to the platform...He made me and I think that the personality we carry around with us every day is something God gave us individually so that He can incorporate that with what He wants us to do, to reach the kind of people that we

are able to reach. I may not be able to reach somebody in a three piece suit, who is business oriented...but I can sit down and talk to somebody who, like myself 22 years ago, was a drug addict, who was an alcoholic, who was down on their luck and didn't have anywhere to go. I can relate to that. God gives us those personalities from day that we're born. People allow people to change them, and I don't want to change. I'm happy with what God made.

*KCB: That in itself is an amazing testimony. When I look at you as a Christian woman, I see someone to emulate, I see someone who is a Mom and a minister and those two things alone are huge roles. What a turnaround has taken place in your life. Will you talk about how it came to be?*

SKK: Like I said, 22 years ago I found myself with nobody. I was raising three children all on my own, not knowing from one day to the next how everything was going to come out for them, let alone me. I had been down on my luck so much that I didn't know what to do. I didn't have a Christian upbringing, I didn't have any of that to fall back on. I did have the memory of my granny taking me to Sunday School when I was about five years old. I got to go 3 Sundays one summer and that was all I ever had. But in that time she taught me the song Jesus Loves Me. That's a song that it doesn't matter how far away you've strayed, you never forget those words....or how old you get...that's a song that just keeps beating in your heart.

*continues>*

*Sharron Kay King-Driver smiles next to her husband Joel.*





After I started getting the hunger of wanting to know who this Jesus was then that's when conviction fell on me. I started to really look at myself. I hated who I saw in the mirror and I wouldn't ever look in the mirror. One day I remember walking through the house and just crying out, "If You love me, I want to know You." Because that song was just going through my mind. About six weeks later, I found myself in Jackson County, Kentucky, walking into a little Pentecostal church, sitting in the back row, conviction all over me, crocodile tears just rolling down my face, not having a clue what was going on. We're talking old time Pentecost now. People are up at the front dancing around, singing, everybody's playing tambourines and guitars. I'm sitting down there bawling and squalling, thinking, "What in the world?" I ended up at the altar that night and turned my life over to God. He completely set me free and delivered me.

The first thing I wanted to do was hug my kids. Those were the most precious gifts that God had given me and up until that point I didn't know that. I heard them crying in the background as I was at the altar pouring my heart out for forgiveness and I wanted to hug them so bad. When I finally came to my

senses, I saw them and I just held my arms out and I hugged them. I knew I squeezed the breath right out of them. But that was the first time I really felt like a mother. I felt that love and compassion. And I love to think that that's the love and compassion I found that night in the arms of Jesus.

It was back in '87 and my oldest daughter was nine, my son was six, and Elizabeth wasn't even two yet. From that moment on, I had them in church. God completely turned my life inside out. He set me free from 14 years of drug addiction and alcoholism that night at the altar. Completely took it away from me. I wanted to do my very best from that night on to be a good mom and to teach them what I didn't have the privilege of knowing. I am so thankful that that happened in my life. My girls are now both married to preachers and they are raising my grandchildren in church. My son knows what it's like to walk with God. I'm holding on to the promise that one day God is going to use him. He's big into his own thing right now, but the Bible tells me if I raised him up the way he should go...to me that's a promise, and I'm holding to that.

That's how my story is incorporated into the ministry. My first ministry was of course my children. I had to teach them that I was their mommy. I had neglected them for so long. I would take them places and leave them for days, while I was out on binges. It's no wonder they didn't have any respect for me. I wasn't there for them. But from that night on, I did all I needed to do to make it up to them. So my ministry began there, for forgiveness. After that, I had such a longing to do something for the Lord, and that's when the songs started to come and I started singing in church. Then someone else would want me to come sing at their church. Just one after another. That has led up to where I am today.

*KCB: That's something I've seen, and definitely in my own life: When we obey, it takes awhile, but He honors that obedience and gives us opportunity. I know you feel like that's why you are here. What an amazing opportunity to share that with the moms sitting in your audience who have no idea what to do. You say you were drawn to this church without knowing. So many people believe they have to understand faith and understand God before they go there and it is just kind of the opposite.*

SKK: It is because I think I reached the point where I had nothing, I had no one. I was empty and there was nothing left. God knew that's what I needed. You go back to that personal relationship again. God knew what I needed at that moment. He knew what I needed the most. All I wanted to know was who this Jesus was that loved me.

It's been a process through the years. I've had to learn a lot. I've had to learn that not everybody's my friend, even if they are sitting in the church. I believe that God puts certain people in our lives sometimes for lessons we need to learn, and also in turn to learn to trust in Him more. The Bible tells us, "Let every man be a liar and God be the only truth". For a long time, I didn't know what that meant. When I first read it, I didn't know anything anyway, so I thought, "Well I can't believe anybody." Then I came to understand that if it's not from the Word of God, and if it's not of God, don't put your hope in it, don't put your faith in it. Put your hope and your trust in God. It takes a long time to learn these things.

*KCB: I remember a day on Facebook this past year finding out that you were a Mrs. Again, and I just thought it was such wonderful news. New chances at love. Do you want to share about that?*

SKK: I'll be discreet, because it is a part of my personal life I don't like to talk about too much, as far as the past is concerned. But before I found Christ, I was involved in a marriage where we were both bar-hoppers. After I became saved, I tried everything I could to make our home, a home and it just never worked. Nothing was ever good enough and I tried for 13 years after that to hold things together. Long story short, I found myself very alone again. That was another confusing time because I thought that now that I had the Lord in my life, everything was going to be good, everything was going to work out. It didn't work out that way. But I've learned that sometimes God closes a door so He can open a window. That was a weight on me to keep me from going out and doing what God wanted me to do. I couldn't do it.

I know this is a very touchy subject in Southern Gospel music. I spent many years alone after that, traveling the highways, following this calling that God had placed in my life. A lot of people started praying for me and they would share with me that they were praying for me, that God would send me somebody that could be by my side and help me. I never thought it would happen. I didn't think there was anybody left. I started praying then too, and I said, "God, if it be Your will, send someone into my life when I'm not expecting it. Just let me walk in my life and let him come to me, that way I know You sent him. And that's exactly what happened. One day during a concert, I was halfway through the concert and Joel walked in. I was already back at my table, taking a break, drinking some water and having a rest. He walked in and it was like all time just stood still. I know everybody says, "Well that's just silly", but I was there, I know it happened. But I knew. After the service, he came up to my table. I had already known him two years prior to that, but just in passing. We spoke and that was about the extent of it. But at the end of that service, he came up to me and he had a piece of paper that he had written his name and his number on, and he rolled it up as tight as a tourniquet. So that let me know that he was nervous. And I thought that was so cool! He handed it to me and he said, "Call me sometime". So that's what started it. From that moment on it was almost like we were inseparable. We were married November 29. We have been inseparable. We serve God together, we pray together, go to church together. He gets up and sings with me now sometimes. He doesn't want me to tell that. God's got a work for him too and I honestly believe that our paths have crossed to further this ministry and to expand it even more so I'm just anxious to see what's going to happen.

*KCB: Your countenance just lit up talking about that.*

SKK: Obviously it's just been amazing. I love him so much.

*KCB: So Joel is traveling with you. I wanted to ask you about that, the transition.*

SKK: It was kind of strange at first because I've gone so many places by myself. I'm so proud to be his wife. I wanted to be Sharron Driver. But we talked about it and my producer told me that it took so long for me to get established in the industry, it probably wouldn't be a good thing to change it on my albums. So now I go by Sharron Kay King-Driver. For the first several months when I would go to churches I had been to before, they were all happy that I got married, they would come to the table and say, "I was praying that God would send you somebody." Everyone just loves him and he has such a sweet spirit about him. And we've been told by many people that our spirits are familiar. How better can we be assured than to know that.

For the record, I'm very proud to be his wife and very blessed. We have a wonderful relationship, and God is the center of it.

*KCB: That's the main thing.*

SKK: I want to encourage all of those single people out there that have almost given up hope: Don't stop believing. God has someone out there, you just have to wait on Him.

[Sharron's single] "Don't Stop Believing" came after we started dating and that's why I wrote that song, because of what happened in our lives. When you least expect it, God will move.

*KCB: You moved this year. Is that opening up more doors in your ministry?*

SKK: Indiana to Georgia. The south has been more popular for me. Indiana is my home state, so I am always welcome in Indiana. But I love the state of Georgia. Always have, since the first time I went there. It's a beautiful state. I'm still traveling full time. It's unknown to us right now just where this ministry is going to end up. We just want God to have His way with us. We both know that the return of Christ is very soon. There's a lot of people out there that have not heard the message, and we've got to be about drawing people to Him. We just want God's will in our life.

*KCB: I think you'll find it then.*

SKK: I think so.

*- Thanks to Lorraine Walker for transcribing the interview!*



# Christmas gifts with meaning: Charities make effort to support soldiers, those in need

By Jerry 'J.T.' Tinkle

This Christmas season many people will be searching for gifts of an unusual nature or deeper meaning. Many people will be looking at charitable organizations that will benefit the less fortunate at Christmastime, or looking for ways to help people who cannot afford to go Christmas shopping for themselves or their families. We have looked at some for your consideration.

## Holiday Mail for Heroes.

This is program sponsored by the Red Cross. Now in its third year, the Holiday Mail for Heroes program provides Americans with the opportunity to extend holiday greetings and thanks to service members and veterans. Last year the program received more than 1.4 million cards for military men and women, their families and veterans.

The public can participate in the campaign by sending holiday cards with personal messages to a special post office box December 7 (Ed. Note: That's now!). The Red Cross and Pitney Bowes will then screen cards for hazardous materials, sort and package the cards, and deliver them to military bases and hospitals, veterans' hospitals and other locations in the U.S. and abroad during the holidays.

Pitney Bowes is providing all screening, packaging and shipping at no charge, as well as providing thousands of volunteer hours around the country. The Red Cross will utilize volunteers at over 300 participating chapters nationwide to sort and deliver greetings to military and veteran's hospitals

and military bases in November and December.

Holiday cards should be addressed and sent to:

Holiday Mail for Heroes

P.O. Box 5456

Capitol Heights, MD 20791-5456.

Please be sure to affix adequate postage. Cards must be received no later than December 7. Cards received after this date will be returned to senders. For reasons of processing and safety, participants are asked to refrain from sending "care packages," monetary gifts, using glitter, or including any inserts with the cards.

Additional ways to become involved with the campaign include connecting with fellow card senders through Facebook at [www.facebook.com/redcross](http://www.facebook.com/redcross) and Twitter at [www.twitter.com/redcross](http://www.twitter.com/redcross) and #holidaymail.

For more information and card requirements, please visit [www.redcross.org/holidaymail](http://www.redcross.org/holidaymail).

## Books for Soldiers

BooksforSoldiers (BFS) began during the Gulf War I when the founder, Storm Williams, asked his friends to send books to his brother's college buddies that suddenly deployed to Riyadh and his deployed unit. It lasted a little while.

Storm restarted the website in 2002. He thought the war be done in just a few weeks, after the invasion of substitute on-set of operations in Iraq. Having utilized a 'netroots' kind of effort, it is now a popular website with a lot of traffic and a

CONTINUES>



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huge reach: last year their volunteers sent an estimated \$2.9 million in care packages.

BFS is a “self-service” site. It provides a way for you as a member to see the soldier requests as well as their names and addresses directly, so that they leave it to individual members to send items directly.

BFS is a nonprofit 501(3)c organization. It receives no government support and while they are grateful for all the corporate support they get, it has been much less in the poor economy.

One of the things to keep in mind is that soldiers are out fighting a war or acting as peacekeepers. That means they are very busy. That means little sleep, lots of work at times and for others lots of downtime. Sometimes BFS just doesn’t hear from soldiers. But many of them do. They get thank-you e-mails all the time. It is very rewarding to keep in contact. They get letters and photos that are posted all the time. Many of these are posted on the web site under “Notes from the Soldiers”.

BFS sends all kinds of media: books, CDs, DVDs, magazines and video games (the games, not the gaming systems). Many members put in small care items, snacks, to make a more complete care package. And during the holidays they have been known to send holiday items to make the place feel more like home.

To ensure troop safety, per the Department of Defense, BFS asks that you fill out a short application and have it notarized. This verifies that you are who you say you are for security purposes, since anyone in the world would have access to troop addresses if the BFS site were open to the public. It takes about 1-2 weeks to process your application, and then the private portion of the web site with the troop addresses opens up to you. The application can be found at the top of every page on the site under “Official Volun-

teer.”

BFS has about 700 new requests each month for every type of reading material imaginable. Their addresses are current and updated monthly (bimonthly for Groups and Forgotten Soldiers) to make room for new requests. It can be overwhelming to choose a few recipients when the need is so great, but they are always available to help you until you figure out how the site works.

To get involved in the program, go to [booksforsoldiers.com/forum](http://booksforsoldiers.com/forum) and look for the “Register” button.

### **I.D.E.S. (International Disaster Emergency Service)**

The purpose of IDES is to bring glory to God by bringing help and hope to our hurting world. According to its mission statement, “IDES serves as a link in the godly chain of concern that connects hurting people from around the world, with godly believers who have hearts of compassion.”

Each year during the Christmas season, IDES offers a gift catalog- a source for truly meaningful gifts that can warm the hearts of your loved ones as they change lives around the world. It’s a simple, significant way to celebrate the birth of Jesus by sharing the blessings of faith, hope, and love.

With the IDES gift catalog you can transform the life of someone in need. You can give a goat, Bibles, or mosquito nets for children or families living in poverty. Or you can provide school supplies to help young students get an education. There are ways a church or church group could invest in a project, such as to supply a well to a thirsty village, or a water buffalo for a farmer in Myanmar.

You can gather your own ideas by visiting the IDES website at [www.ides.org](http://www.ides.org) and clicking on ‘click here for your 2009 ides gift catalog’. And while you are on the website, you can see how to donate in other ways as well.

For more information, contact an IDES staff member, whose email addresses can be found at [IDES.org](http://IDES.org).

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Melissa Flores

# Connecting with The Akins

*I had the opportunity to speak one-on-one with David Akin, father and founder of The Akins of Hampton, GA. His three talented*

*and anointed sons, Nick, Eli, and Dave have willingly joined their father's ministry and have made his dream come true. I spoke with David about the challenges and triumphs of bi-generational ministry.*

Was it always your dream to have a father/sons team, or was it something that just evolved over the years?

Years ago, I spoke with a young man whose father was a well-known evangelist known all over the world. His father had recently passed away after many years of ministry. I said to the young man, "Tell me about your dad. I know he was an incredible preacher. What was he like?" Tears rolled down his face and what he said to me that day changed my life. He said, "David, my dad was a wonderful dad. He loved us, but the truth is he didn't get to be home much. I didn't know him very well, and I look forward to getting to know him in heaven."

My heart broke that night. I went to my hotel room, got down on my knees and said, "Oh, God! If you're a big enough God to call an old country boy like me, and give me a gift to bless others... I believe you're a big enough God to call my family. Would you please somehow include my family?" I believe God reached down that night and touched my boys, and they've never been the same.

David, you are the kind of father who honors each of your sons, equally. You've given each of them room to grow and a place to showcase their abilities. Is this the secret to your success as a ministry and a family?

Over the years, as the boys began to grow and mature, I've had to learn to listen to them. I used to let them sing every now and then, and now they let me sing every now and then (chuckle). God has given them gifts, and I so respect them because they are all better musicians than I ever dreamed of being. Now, they teach me chords! I need to listen to them.

You recently received an award for having the

No.1 Christian Song, "Good To Know It's Not the End," in *Power Source Magazine* for the month of June. Congratulations! What was that like?

They had a big awards ceremony in Nashville, and we didn't know how to act! You see stuff like this on TV, or in the magazines, but you never believe you'll experience something like that yourself! We were so thankful and honored to get the award, we weren't sure what to say!

David, you have a heart for many flavors of music. How did you develop your signature Akin's style?

We have been through several stages in the past few years. We have prayed for years that God would show us a genre of music that would reach all ages. We didn't know if there was such a thing, and we didn't know if we could pull it off. But we believe we have found that in Christian Country music. To watch my boys tell their testimonies, and be able to reach every age is what it's all about.

The Akin's latest release "I Want My Stage To Be An Altar" is charting on Southern Gospel Stations nationwide. Listen to and connect with the Akins at [www.theakinonline.com](http://www.theakinonline.com).



Melissa Flores is the morning drive radio host on [www.hesalive.net](http://www.hesalive.net), a minister, author and avid connoisseur of all things cocoa and coffee bean. She is married to Jonathan in 1994 is the mother of 12-year-old daughter, Madeline. She also serves as a staff minister at the inter-denominational church, World Lighthouse in Grantsville, Maryland USA.



The Akins men celebrate their number one song.

Mental illness strikes one in four Americans and depression is diagnosed in one in ten people. This disease is not a respecter of persons and can be found in the church as well as in the general population. Yet the Church often turns its head as untrained leaders are unable to deal with this illness that encompasses spirit, soul and body.

In this third and final installment of our series on Mental Health, we look to the current treatment for the mentally ill and what the Church can do to help those in the fold find the help they so desperately need.

Once again, we look to our Mental Health 'panel,' consisting of Dr. Bob Nichols, Jimmy McMillan and Timothy Mills to shed some light on an illness that has so long remained in the shadows. The treatments available can range from chemical assistance, counseling, and behavioral therapy to hospital treatment and homeopathic cures.

Often those with mental illness find it difficult to maintain a prescribed drug therapy. Patients may stop taking medication when they begin to feel better, believing they don't need further treatment. This medication often has side effects such as weight gain or loss of sex drive. For some, the idea that they need chemical assistance to "feel normal" is so embarrassing that they will just stop taking their pills. Medication compliance becomes more of a complication when

*It is easy for people to say 'God loves you', but [sufferers] may be angry because they just don't see it.*



the patient stops and resumes taking the pills without respecting the possible effects that will have on the chemical balance of their brain.

Timothy Mills, member of the Southern Brothers and student of psychology, remarks on the need for medication and the belief that is held by many that this is not needed. "If someone is diagnosed with diabetes, no one debates the implications of insulin," says Tim. "Nitroglycerin tablets are condoned if someone has heart problems. Mental disorders are no exception. There is a possibility of abuse, but that can occur with any medication. In regards to children, I believe that MI medications are many times abused. I think some children need medication, but it should be the absolute last resort."

Jimmy McMillan, member of McMillan and Life, was recently diagnosed with clinical depression and has gone through several types of treatment. "In many cases such as mine drugs play a vital role," says Jimmy. "It is not until someone is diagnosed properly that the correct balance between drug and counseling treatment

can be determined. There are a great number of people out there that simply need someone they can really talk to and work out problems and dilemmas in their life or past. However there are those who need medication to balance their system chemically. Many times it takes medication just for someone to reach the point where they can effectively receive counseling. There are far too many combinations of treatment to go into here but needless to say all forms and combinations are useful."

Dr. Bob Nichols, mental health

# Faith and Medicine for Mental Illness

Getting Past the Christian Stigma of Depression

By Lorraine Walker  
3rd of 3 parts

Originally published at  
SGMRadio.com, March 2009

> continues



expert, agrees with Timothy and Jimmy. "Drugs frequently are essential in bringing emotional equilibrium back to the client so that therapy can be started. Frequently the clients are so out of balance they are virtually catatonic or psychotic, to an extent that they are completely detached from reality. Drugs help the endeavor to achieve a good measure of reality, which is a prerequisite for therapy."

The Church can play a vital role in providing spiritual counseling to accompany therapy that may be provided to the patient. Leaders need to be trained in this area to properly counsel, but every member in the pew can offer acceptance and unconditional love.

Jimmy McMillan comments on the Church's role. "The biggest thing the Church can do to help is to show love and compassion, come to see Mental Illness as just that, an illness, although Mental Illness is one of the least understood illnesses today I believe the Church needs to be leading the way in providing a safe place for someone to say 'I need help'."

"Bring knowledgeable, dynamic mental health professionals that are part of the Christian faith into the church," suggests Timothy Mills. "A quarterly visit at a different Sunday school class where the professional can address the particular issues for that age group would be appropriate. I think it would be a positive way to promote a biannual seminar addressing the many issues we as Christians face today."

Dr. Bob Nichols has made it a significant part of his

life's work to assist pastors with Mental Illness back to health. He sees what Mental Illness can do to those in the church and to their leaders. "As a minister as well as a psychologist, I have a heavy burden in this area," says Dr. Nichols. "It is my perspective that communities of churches should gather together and develop a plan to help their parishioners with mental illness. Unless a church is very large, it does not have the resources to dedicate large amounts of funds exclusively to mental illness."

*The words 'you'll get over it' are some of the cruelest there are to someone suffering with this disease."*

Dr. Nichols continues, "There are some problems and solutions that we need to consider, including the fact that more

and more churches are moving to 'lay counselors' trained by professionals. This is a great aid to the minor types of mental illness. These lay counselors are then resourced by professionals, who have an agreement with the local church to receive their parishioners without referral."

"Some parishioners do not have the proper insurance to cover mental illness, therefore, are not able to go to professionals and have to go to lay counselors. There are very few lay counselors with professional training in the field of mental illness. Communities of churches could group together to defray this expenditure as they contract Christian doctors to work with their parishioners."

However, Dr. Nichols is aware of the lack of education in this area. "Better training is needed for pastors and front-line Christian leaders as to how to deal with mental illness."

## For more information:

### Resources:

The National Institute of Mental Health:

[www.nimh.nih.gov/index.shtml](http://www.nimh.nih.gov/index.shtml)

United States Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration: [www.mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/](http://www.mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/)

*Reprinted from Part One:* Depression is an illness that involves the body, mood, and thoughts; that affects the way a person eats and sleeps, the way one feels about oneself, and the way one thinks about things. A depressive disorder is not the same as a passing blue mood. It is not a sign of personal weakness or a condition that can be wished away. People with a depression cannot merely "pull themselves together" and get better. Without recognition and help, symptoms can last for weeks, months, or years.

### Depression symptoms include:

- \* Persistent sad, anxious, or "empty" mood
- \* Feelings of hopelessness, pessimism, guilt, worthlessness, helplessness
- \* Loss of interest or pleasure in hobbies and activities that were once enjoyed, including sex
- \* Decreased energy, fatigue, being "slowed down"
- \* Difficulty concentrating, remembering, making decisions
- \* Insomnia, early-morning awakening, or oversleeping
- \* Appetite and/or weight loss or overeating and weight gain
- \* Thoughts of death or suicide; suicide attempts
- \* Restlessness, irritability
- \* Persistent physical symptoms that do not respond to treatment, such as headaches, digestive disorders, and chronic pain

If you or anyone you love fits this description, please seek help from your family physician.

There are many in the pews who suffer from depression and other forms of mental illness who will not approach their pastors for assistance. Often their friends are their resource for comfort and help, so it is helpful to recognize the symptoms of depression as discussed in the first part of this series. (see sidebar).

Sometimes these symptoms are hidden from others as the person goes through their private battle with darkness. When this only comes to light at a suicide or an attempt at suicide, it can be devastating.

Jimmy McMillan suggests, "One thing I might add is to always take someone seriously when they are sharing thoughts of depression. What may seem like the smallest of things to you may be a seemingly unbearable burden to them. Always remember the words 'you'll get over it' are some of the cruelest there are to someone suffering with this disease."

For those who are close to a sufferer of Mental Illness, saying the right words and offering the proper kind of assistance can be a difficult thing to do. Often it is hard to know what to say or do when you approach a friend or loved one who is in the hospital or who has tried to commit suicide. Timothy Mills suggests, "Tell that person that you love them very much; you think they are valuable and your love for them is as non-judgmental as humanly possible. I would keep the conversation on concrete, tangible subjects. Unless they wanted to talk about God, I would avoid it."

Tim continues, "It is easy for people to say 'God loves you', but someone may be angry because they just don't see it. Someone might say, 'God doesn't love me' and you would respond with 'I don't believe that, but you know that I love you.' It is easy for someone to argue the intangible but very difficult to argue the tangible. In any debate, one is successful when com-

mon ground is achieved."

Dr. Nichols adds, "Practical help for suicide attempts and mental illness are not all the same. The best care for suicide attempts is for the care-giver to clearly understand the process of grief, which is: Denial, Confusion, Bargaining, Fear, Blame, Anger, Depression, Relief, Sadness, Hope and Trust Reconnection, and finally, Acceptance. Understanding this process will enable the care-giver to discover the appropriate response and support the individual going through crisis."

We trust that this look into the world of Mental Illness will enable our readers to be more aware and compassionate of those around them who may be suffering from this insidious disease. The Church needs education in this area, but the fruit of the Spirit that the Lord develops in our lives is one of the greatest aids in helping the sufferer feel accepted by those around them.

*Thanks again to our Mental Health panel:*

*Dr. Bob Nichols is an expert on mental illness and works with pastors to assist them back to a state of mental health. He has a doctorate in theology and psychology and over thirty years in ministry. [www.drbobnichols.com](http://www.drbobnichols.com)*

*Jimmy McMillan is a southern gospel artist with McMillan And Life, and is a Christian who suffers from clinical depression. <http://www.mcmillanandlife.com>*

*Timothy Mills, southern gospel artist with The Southern Brothers, is pursuing his degree in Psychology. Timothy can be reached through Southern Spin at [sobros@southernspin.com](mailto:sobros@southernspin.com).*

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*It is good to praise the  
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- Psalm 92:1*

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# WEB-CIPE BOX

RECIPES SHARED BY OUR FRIENDS AND  
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Try one of these during your Christmas & New Year's celebrations. Submit your 'diet-friendly' favorite to us for the January issue at [facebook.com/sngnscoops](http://facebook.com/sngnscoops) or [kelly@sngnscoops.com](mailto:kelly@sngnscoops.com)

## Potato-Fennel Gratin - Tori Taff

(NOTE: I use one of those mandoline things to slice the potatoes, onions and fennel. Sounds fancy, but you can pick them up for not very much money (Target, Bed, Bath & Beyond) and it slices everything quickly and perfectly—just watch your fingers!)

- 2 small fennel bulbs
- 1 yellow onion, thinly sliced
- 2 tablespoons good olive oil
- 1 tablespoon unsalted butter
- 2 pounds russet potatoes (4 large potatoes)
- 2 cups plus 2 tablespoons heavy cream
- 2 1/2 cups grated Gruyère cheese (1/2 pound)

(kind of expensive , but SO WORTH IT!!!)

- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1/2 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F. Butter the inside of a 10-by-15-by-2-inch (10-cup) baking dish.

Remove the stalks from the fennel and cut the bulbs in half lengthwise. Remove the cores and thinly slice the bulbs crosswise, making approximately 4 cups of sliced fennel. Sauté the fennel and onions in the olive oil and butter on medium-low heat for 15 minutes, until tender.

Peel the potatoes, then thinly slice them by hand or with a mandoline. Mix the sliced potatoes in a large bowl with 2 cups of cream, 2 cups of Gruyère, salt, and pepper. Add the sautéed fennel and onion and mix well. Pour the potatoes into the baking dish. Press down to smooth the potatoes. Combine the remaining 2 tablespoons of cream and 1/2 cup of Gruyère and sprinkle on the top. Bake for 1 1/2 hours, until the potatoes are very tender and the top is browned and bubbly. Allow to set for 10 minutes and serve.

Tori: [babybloomr.com](http://babybloomr.com)

## Wendy Word's Banana Nut Bread

I make this BN bread every year. It's very nice to wrap in a pretty Christmas towel and give as a gift. :) It's also great with organic ingredients!

- 1/2 c. Shortening
- 1/2 c. Butter
- 3 c. Sugar
- 2 t. Vanilla
- 4 eggs
- 1/4 t. Salt
- 3 1/2 c. Flour
- 2 t. Soda
- 1/2 c. Buttermilk
- 6 small very ripe bananas, mashed
- 1 c. Chopped pecans

Cream shortening, butter, sugar and vanilla until fluffy; add eggs, one at a time, blending thoroughly after each addition. In a separate bowl, sift salt, flour, and soda twice. Add dry ingredients to the creamy mixture, alternating with milk. Combine bananas and nuts and blend into mixture. Pour into greased pan or pans. Cook in a 350 oven for 1 hour and 10 minutes. Enjoy and have a Merry Christmas!

Wendy: [wendywordandforgiven.com](http://wendywordandforgiven.com)





## VENNA'S COCONUT CAKE -

Penney Talley (Southern Gospel Wife)

If you have ever come to Deep South Regional Quartet Convention, you have seen this cake... a special treat each year.

Bake a regular boxed yellow cake according to directions. Cool and cut each layer in half.

Separately - make filling

1 pint of sour cream, 2 cups of sugar, Beat good till sugar is blended - will take a few minutes. Save 1/4 cup of mixture, and set aside. Add 2/3 bag of shredded coconut to remaining mixture. Layer filling between cake halves.

Add 1 8 oz container of coolwhip to 1/4 cup of reserve and ice the outer sides and top of cake.

Refrigerate till serving. This cake is even better if you make it three days ahead. See if you can leave it alone that long. Most times, it doesn't last that long.

*This recipe was shared by Venna Willis - Magnolia, AR. She has blessed many people with her love to bake this cake and share it with so many.*

Penney - [dsrqc.com](http://dsrqc.com)



## Aunt Jen's OreoBalls - Kelly Capriotti Burton

1 package regular size Oreo cookies, crushed  
1 (8 ounce) package cream cheese, softened  
1 package white chocolate

Crush Oreos and mix by hand or blender with cream cheese.

Roll into walnut-sized balls.

Chill for one hour.

Dip into melted white chocolate (melt according to package).

Decorate with holiday sprinkles or icing.

Allow to harden on wax paper.

Wow everyone at your Christmas party!

My dear friend - who is Aunt Jen to my girls - brought us these last year, Super easy & very yummy!

Kelly - [mylifeastheglue.com](http://mylifeastheglue.com)



## America: A Great Destination

Story & Photos By  
Stephanie Kelley



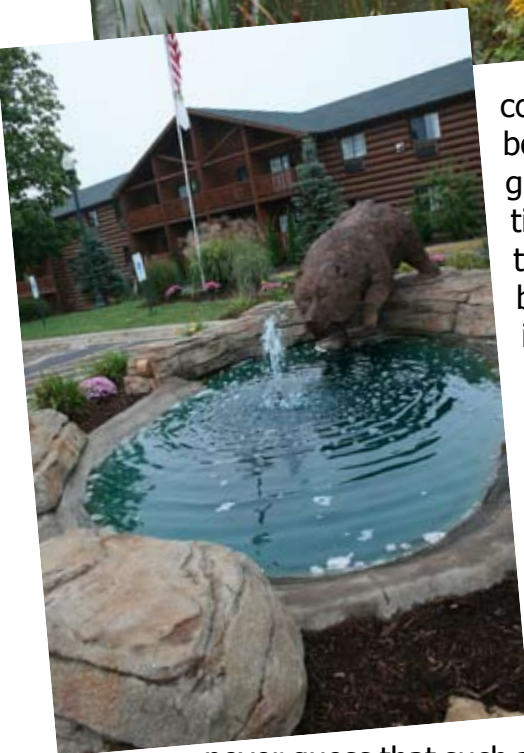
Grizzly Jack's was the 2300 square foot cabin that we had the privilege of staying in. If this is "roughing it" then COUNT me in! The authentic log cabin was spacious and comfortable and was large enough to sleep a whopping 18 people. The large dining table was fit for a king and the Queen size bunk beds were my little ones favorites.

The cabin was fully equipped and ready to be enjoyed. The top floor featured a King sized bed suite complete with a Jacuzzi tub and gas fireplace. There was a flat screen TV and plenty of room to spread out. The main floor housed another bathroom, the large modern kitchen and dining area, as well as the living room. There was a deck just off the main room too. The bottom floor featured two more bedrooms and two bathrooms and a laundry room.

The pond was a favorite for my children, but not quite as cool as the neon glitter and happy sounds of the arcade. We didn't get a chance to enjoy the ice cream parlor on site, but we did utilize the gift shop that night to buy some laundry detergent. I was very tempted by all the fun things at the gift shop, but I didn't think I could face my readers if I, the FRUGAL "coupon" lady, blew a wad at the gift shop. The prices were very reasonable, so perhaps I could have justified it!

If you are planning a family reunion or a Christmas getaway, consider Grizzly Jacks. Or if you want to plan for an adventurous vacation, check out the outdoor fun at Starved Rock State Park, just a short drive away. There are 18 canyons that were formed by glacial melt water and stream erosion. The park is best known for its fascinating rock formations, primarily St. Peter sandstone.

We so enjoyed our time. Thank you Grizzly Jack for making us feel so welcome!



never guess that such a gem of excitement exists in amongst the farm fields.

Grizzly Jack's Grand Bear Resort Lodge is a friendly family oriented destination. With a huge indoor water park and an arcade that would make Chuck E. Cheese jealous, you are sure to find something for every member of the family. When we drove up to the lodge we saw a large Grizzly sculpture, who keeps watch at the front door. The friendly staff and cozy lobby are a great welcome. But my favorite part of



*Stephanie Kelley is a public speaker and owner of Queen-O-Q, a blog featuring coupon match-ups, freebies, samples and information on frugal living. She is married and has two children and lives in Washington State.*

*Follow her at  
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## Who's making new music...

CD Reviews by Chad Hayes

**COLLINGSWORTH FAMILY**

*The Answer*

[www.thecollingsworthfamily.com](http://www.thecollingsworthfamily.com)

One of the most well-known family groups in Southern Gospel is the Collingsworth Family. Since January of 2000, they have maintained an all-concert ministry. The family consists of Phil and Kim, along with their 4 children: Brooklyn, Courtney, Phillip, and Olivia. With this many people in the group, they have the ability to be very versatile in their vocal lineups.

*The Answer* is the group's newest album, following the highly successful *We Still Believe* album from two years ago. It contains 14 selections, including two instrumental. Also, there's a bit of variety in the song selection, from old hymns to brand-new stuff. Finally, this album doesn't come in the typical jewel case common to CD's. Instead, it is packaged in the newer-style cardboard case. (I really like these cases- all groups should go to using this format). Inside the case, you will find the CD itself along with the booklet that is usually inserted into the front of a jewel case to make the cover. As I opened the booklet, I was pleased to find the song lyrics printed inside. And, as an added bonus, the family had taken the time to list which members of the family performed on which songs. This is a great help to reviewers like me as well as other listeners.

Now, the moment you've all been waiting for: THE SONGS!

Starting things off is an up-tempo Daryl Williams song called "I Shall Not Be Moved." The whole family sings on this song, one slightly different sound than your average Southern Gospel selection. Song #2 is performed by a ladies' trio consisting of Kim, Brooklyn, and Courtney. "Fear Not Tomorrow" is a mid-tempo song that features some VERY smooth vocals by these ladies. This is simply a joy to listen to. The entire family comes back for the third song before Phil breaks out his trumpet for the old hymn, "When The Roll Is Called Up Yonder."

The entire family sings together on "I Want A Principle Within". As you begin to listen to this slower song, it will hit you that this sounds exactly like something Charles Wesley would write, and it's his. I found myself wondering why this song isn't found in more hymnals. Next is up-tempo Gerald Crabb song, "I Know." Again,

the entire family is featured, but the sound is different than on previous songs that utilize this lineup. This one definitely makes the favorites list.

Next is the mid-tempo "Ever Gentle, Ever Sweet," another ladies' trio arrangement. The trio of Phil, Kim, and Brooklyn then tackles an older Lanny Wolfe song called "Jesus Is Still The Answer," mid-tempo, powerful, and familiar to most listeners.

The ninth song features the three oldest Collingsworth kids: Brooklyn, Courtney, and Phillip. Daryl Williams and Wayne Haun penned the up-tempo "Count Your Blessings Again." This song has a "big brass" sound to it, and the vocals of these young people are an encouragement as to the future of Southern Gospel Music. Another trio follows, then the entire family comes back again for the slower, "Oh The Thought That Jesus Loves Me," featuring very smooth vocals against an acoustic background.

"Bottom Of The Barrel," was penned by Phil Collingsworth and is the first traditional-sounding Southern Gospel song here. Song #13 features Kim, one of the most well-known pianists in the industry, on an instrumental rendition of the classic hymn, "Great Is Thy Faithfulness." Phil, Kim, Brooklyn, and Courtney finish things off with a slower number entitled "I Want Jesus More Than Anything".

*The Answer* is very different from the family's previous release, perhaps marking a shift in the family's musical direction, which is not a bad thing. I enjoyed the song selection and the vocals very much throughout the album, as well as seeing how the Collingsworth kids are developing their vocals as they grow older. My only complaint is that the album seemed to drag just a bit in some places. Even though *We Still Believe* remains my favorite Collingsworth Family album, this is a fine album and one of the better albums produced this year. I give it a rating of 9 out of 10 microphones!

Favorites: "I Shall Not Be Moved", "Fear Not Tomorrow", "I Know" and "Count Your Blessings Again"

Chad Hayes is also the resident CD reviewer for SGMRadio.com More reviews of your favorite artists can be read there.



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