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December 2010

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Jason Crabb: Gifts to Share

The Gift of Love at Christmas

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

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to look a lot like
Christmas...
so Rob is thinking
about the 2011
Diamond Awards! -
and the Savior of
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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.

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Love changes everything.
 – Black/Hart for Aspects of Love
"A baby changes everything."
 – Nichols, Wiseman, & Wiseman,
"A Baby Changes Everything"
"Aren't they the same thing?" – Kelly Capriotti Burton

Those first two quotes are from songs that run through the theme of my life. The third quote very succinctly describes where my heart has been for the past four years, since I gave birth for the very first time.

There are distinct memories throughout my life of learning first-hand just how much a baby changes everything. One of the earliest ones I recall is, sadly, the first and only time I've attended a wake for a baby. I think she was just over one-year-old, a sweet girl born to a family in our church who had multiple health problems from day one. I remember her name and those of her parents and brother and sister, who were about the age my children are now. I remember the smile and the tears on her mom's face as she greeted mourners. And I remember that little white casket, knowing somehow in my own immaturity that the happy, adorable family who had just lost their youngest child would never be the same.

(Through the wondrous, somewhat frightening power of Facebook and blogging, I do know the family recovered, added two more children, some have become missionaries, and all of them seem to be extremely wonderful people who were not derailed by grief. For more on that subject, please check out our interview with The Quicks this month...)

Another time I learned how a baby changes everything was the day my brother became a daddy. It was exactly 355 days after my nephew was born – not exactly a Rockwell painting, as my brother didn't know he even had a son until that point. Anyhow, I watched my brother – 25, a cop, a macho man, melt like butter. My nephew, "The Prince," changed everything about



what changes everything



KELLY CAPRIOTTI BURTON,
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

my brother's priorities and perspective from that point on. And last Sunday, we all sat together to watch The Prince, now age 11, surrender his own inner macho man and get baptized. What a victory....a moment that likely changed us all a bit, again.

And then there was November 22, 2006, the day my sweet Randa was born. She was a week early, she was breech and therefore required me to have a C-section, she had a few problems at first that meant I couldn't hold her right away, but none of that mattered. All I saw and felt that day was the power of God – because I was never supposed to be able to get pregnant; a whole lot of tests and even a surgery confirmed that. My baby was a miracle. She still is!

It was fitting that Randa was born the day before Thanksgiving and leading into the Christmas season. Christmas is all about a miracle baby... a baby whose existence was impossible, a baby born into an unlikely family in a turbulent time, a baby who gave hope to hopeless, a baby who changed everything.

As I was writing this, a friend posted a picture of her Christmas tree. Her "baby" – her 5-year-old son, suggested they put an arrow on top of their tree, to point toward God, Whom Christmas is about... another wonderful illustration of how a baby changes everything!

Really... everything. Sometimes, I have to remind myself that those beautiful, maternal-leaning Christmas songs, like "A Baby Changes Everything," are not about my miracle child (What can I say? I'm a Mommy and I get caught up in my Mommy-ness sometimes). They – and every part of Christmas – are about The Miracle Child, who made all of our lives' miracles possible.

In this issue, we turn our thoughts toward a topic that perhaps in and of itself seems more natural than miraculous: Love.... That is,





Love, Life, & Legends with Ms. Lou: A glorious finale to 2010

A heartfelt thanks to Scoops Digital Rob Patz, Rhonda Frye, Kelly and Rod Burton for bringing this year to a glorious finale! I marvel at their dedication, considering the many gospel music efforts for which they are responsible. Howard and I share their commitment to the artists and fans of gospel music, and we know it is the desire to spread the message of Jesus Christ that keeps us all going.

Congratulations to Harold and Jean Marshall as 2011 will mark their 20th year of promoting gospel concerts. Their legendary series, Lake Country Jubilee, wrapped the year by presenting Legacy Five and Greater Vision at the beautiful Terrell Performing Arts Centre. Legacy Five introduced their new tenor Gus Gaches, and Greater Vision welcomed the return of their original tenor Chris Allman. Both groups are known for their strong commitment to the gospel, and it is powerful to watch Scott Fowler of Legacy Five and Gerald Wolfe of Greater Vision



Photos this page: Greater Vision: Gerald Wolfe, Rodney Griffin, Chris Allman--with Lou Hildreth at Lake Country Jubilee, Terrell; Emcee Ellis Manley, KJIC radio, with Shannon Perry and Lou Hildreth, Sagemont Church. Next page from top: Ernie Haase & Signature Sound—Ernie, Devin McGlamery, Doug Anderson, and Tim Duncan, Sagemont Church; Paul's Journey—Randall Garland, Ryan Napier, Chad Stephenson, and Rod Treme--Sagemont Church, Houston



lead their groups with Bible in hand.

Ernie Haase and Signature Sound were featured in concert at Sagemont Church in Houston recently. The audience was enthralled with the songs and media presentation from their new Gaither DVD "A Tribute to the Cathedral Quartet." New member Devin McGlamery was warmly welcomed. A fabulous Texas quartet, Paul's Journey, was the host group, and Greater Vision was on hand to sing those great Rodney Griffin songs. Gerald Wolfe spoke emotionally of his involvement with "Compassion International" co-sponsors of the concert. Ellis Manley, KJIC Radio, was the MC, and his gracious remarks in introducing me were humbling. Visiting with Sagemont Pastor John Morgan, plus time with our friends Peggy Dykes and her daughter Shannon Perry, made the concert special.



May your Christmas Season be filled with the love of family and friends, the joy of knowing the Christ Child as your Savior, and the peace that comes from knowing your days are in His hands. Contact us at P. O. Box 271106 Houston, TX 77277 gosplvideo@aol.com www.louhildreth.com



greenish me | cont'd

the gift of love. What I believe we see in the collection of stories here is that in each of our individual lives, the manifestation of love often seems miraculous, whether it's through a mate we prayed to find, a second chance, a hand to hold during adversity, the security of having our parents, or the promise we see in a new life. Love in its pure form: unconditional, joyful, and generous, is the gift God meant all of us to have, and the one He gave to us as the Person we call Jesus.

"My whole life was turned around; I was lost but now I'm found. A Baby changes everything..."

May you have and hold a love, a miracle, a Savior who changes everything for you for this Christmas season. If you aren't sure how to find Him, let us point the way:

It is the Lord's desire- and ours here at SGN Scoops Digital- that you become one of His followers. God has promised eternity in Heaven with Him for all those who accept Him as their Personal Savior.

Admit that you are a sinner.

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

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 sin. He offers this as a free gift to all 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.

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. Then, 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. We'd love to rejoice with you! God bless you!

Me, MYself, & I: Happy HoliDaze

An essay in the form of a short story, in which the two sides of the author's personality metaphorically have a conversation together.

So, got any holiday shopping done yet?" Me asked Myself as Me set down my coffee on the table across from Myself at the Existential Café. Me had a magazine tucked under one arm. Me was nicely dressed in a striped shirt with a plain white tee underneath, black khakis and matching shoes. Me's clothes were very nicely ironed. Me was also wearing my contacts.

Myself looked up from the newspaper I was reading. Myself had glasses, a Transformers T-shirt under a mismatched sweater, jeans (Me didn't bother to put on a belt) and gym shoes bought earlier this year that already had holes in the bottom. Me guzzled a Coke while snacking on cookies.

Myself smirked at Me's corny joke. "No shopping done yet. You?"

"Seeing as how we're really the same person, I think you already know the answer," Me said as I took the seat across from Myself.

"Whatcha got there?" Myself asked Me while stuffing my face with another cookie.

"This magazine has a list of all the stores that won't use 'Christmas' in their advertising," Me explained. "I'm going to make sure I boycott every one of them."

Despite Myself, a chuckle escaped from Myself's lips. Me hadn't expected that.

"Is there a problem?" Me asked.

"No, no, that's fine," Myself said, waving a hand. "Good for you."

"Don't patronize me," Me responded. "I can see right through you, you know."

Myself looked up from what

I was eating. Myself sighed and leaned back in my chair. "All right. You really want to know what I think about all of this?"

"Yes," Me replied. "And don't talk with your mouth full."

"I think people get too worked up about it," Myself said. "I mean, I don't want to get all 'Jehovah's Witness' about it with you, but they're right about one thing: The apostles didn't celebrate Christmas."

"So you don't care about celebrating Christmas at all, then?" Me said sharply.

"You know that's not true. What would I do without candy canes, lighted trees and Christmas movies and specials? But people get all worked up about something that really isn't very Biblical."

"I don't think you get the importance of this," Me

said, leaning forward to emphasize my point. "This is still a nation that—statistically, anyway—is more Christian than anything else."

It bothers me a lot less that companies don't use 'Christmas' in their advertising than the fact that too many people don't have 'Christ' in their Christmas.

Most people don't have a problem with 'Christ' being mentioned in 'Christmas.' The stores are caving to the demands of a few loudmouth troublemakers!"

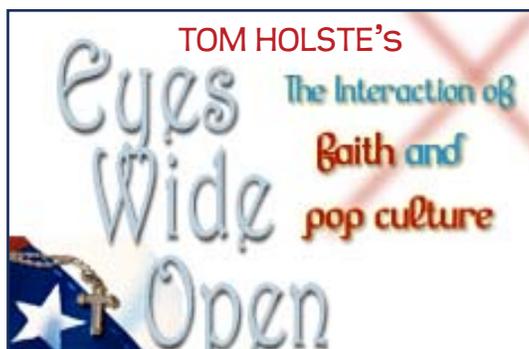
"So we want to respond to that by being loudmouth troublemakers ourselves?"

"That's not the point!" Me exclaimed, banging my fist on the table. "Didn't you read about the woman who was going to be sued for posting on a church bulletin board that she wanted a Christian roommate? Or the pastor who just got arrested for calmly, peacefully handing out Bibles outside a mosque? When he asked the officer why he was being arrested, the officer wouldn't even say."

"The lawsuit against the woman fell through, you know," Myself pointed out.

"I know. But it's the whole idea that the case would even be brought up in the first place," Me said. "This is all part of the same thing—the general 'chilling effect' to squeeze Christianity out of our culture."

"I see your point," Myself conceded. "It makes me ner-



vous, too. But you do know where Christmas comes from, right? December 25 has nothing to do with the day Jesus was born. It was originally a pagan holiday celebrated by the Romans. Whenever somebody tells me, 'We need to get back to the true meaning of Christmas,' the smart aleck in me wants to say, 'Oh, you want to get back to the pagan winter solstice?'"

"I know," Me grumbled. "I'm the one who keeps you from actually saying that to people. But besides that, the pagan holiday had nothing to do with the choosing of the date. As modern scholar S.E. Hijmans notes, 'While [the church in Rome was] aware that pagans called [Dec. 25] the 'birthday' of Sol Invictus, this did not concern them and it did not play any role in their choice of date for Christmas.'"

"Impressive!" Myself responded, eyebrows raised. "I would be even more impressed with your literary knowledge, if I didn't know that you just looked that up under 'Christmas' on Wikipedia in, like, two minutes."

"That's not the point," Me said, shaking his head. "The point is the chokehold that the secularists have on Christmas."

"But how much of it is really about celebrating Christ's birth anyway?" Myself countered, taking another sip of my Coke. "We like to watch movies and specials that tell us that Christmas isn't about commercialism. But look at how much time is spent talking, thinking, and watching 'news reports' about what the hot items are to buy this season! Even in a recession, people are spending like crazy and getting themselves further into debt. Why is that so many people I know have a Wii, even if neither the hus-

band nor the wife is working? Because for most people, Christmas is just about commercialism. It bothers me a lot less that companies don't use 'Christmas' in their advertising than the fact that too many people don't have 'Christ' in their Christmas. Instead, everyone bows down to the golden calf—or, should I call it, the cash cow?"

"You know you like presents, too," Me said, pointing at Myself. "I know how much you want that Inception DVD for Christmas."

Myself sighed again. "Yeah. It's hard not to get into it a bit. But a lot of the things that we think of as being 'Christian' are really just the results of our upbringing in Western culture."

"True," Me replied. "But I still don't see why a store has to say 'holiday' instead of 'Christmas.'"

"You know, that's the biggest joke of all," Myself commented. "Changing it to 'holiday' to be less offensive. Don't they realize that 'holiday' is just short for 'holy day'? It's still in there, whether the secularists realize it or not. The last joke may be on them."

"I hope you're right," Me said, nodding, not fully convinced. Then, finally, Me realized that I had gotten so caught up in the conversation that I forgot to drink my coffee. Me took a sip now. Me smiled, loving the warmth Me felt. "Can I have one of those cookies?" Me asked Myself.

"Go right ahead," Myself said.

"Thanks," Me said, grabbing one and taking a bite. And, covering my mouth so my chewing wasn't visible, Me quickly added, "And Merry Christmas."

Myself raised my Coke, as if to make a toast. "And a happy holy day to you!" 

Carol Sanguinette-How

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It is good to praise the Lord and make music. - Psalm 92:1

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Resolution: Finish Well



Leading up to December 25, our minds are overflowing with thoughts of Christmas and all the activities surrounding the special holiday. Christmas truly is the most wonderful time of the year. However- it

seems as soon as the last present is opened, the last carol sung and the last piece of pecan pie is devoured, we quickly move on to thoughts of the New Year. While radio is broadcasting "countdowns", many of us are silently "counting up" our personal successes and failures.

As I have reflected over 2010, I have sought the Lord to see what adjustments He would have me make for 2011. The message I keep hearing is "Make every effort to finish well!" I feel the Lord is urging me to buckle down, tighten the grip, and fix my eyes on Him like I've never before. He confirmed that message recently at a concert I attended featuring The Akins. As I sat enjoying their amazing talents and beautiful harmony, it seemed as if the music stopped and they started firing missiles from their lips nailing their target- my heart- as they sang "I want my stage to be an altar."

Being called into the ministry is a privilege. True spiritual leaders aren't made by election by men, conferences, committees or boards- only God qualifies. Religious position can be attained, but only God and Him alone grants spiritual authority. Usually, He chooses those who have been seeking Him with all their hearts. "When His searching eye alights on a man He has qualified, He anoints with His Spirit and separates him to His distinctive ministry." (J. Oswald Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership*, Chicago Moody Press, 1989). In every single generation, God's called are given the opportunity to respond and are equipped by God Himself to do the job. Most people start with a bang, but fizzle out before it is all over- That's historically proven!

The Bible records life after life of people called *and* equipped for service, but who never quite accomplished the assignment. For instance, think about King Saul and King David. Both men had the exact same opportunity. The Bible tells a dramatic story of both of their callings. Saul's calling and anointing described in I Samuel 9 & 10 was probably more dramatic than that of David, the Shepherd boy's. Saul had a great start but before his ministry was complete, the Lord was sorry He had ever

made him King of Israel. (I Samuel 15:35)

Remember Samson? What an opportunity he had. He was called and anointed before he was ever born, but never fulfilled his calling either. I find Judges 16:21b chilling. "When he (Samson) woke up he thought, I will do as before and shake myself free, but he didn't realize the Lord had left him." *Tissue please!*

Matthew 10 tells us Judas was charged, commissioned, and given authority to minister along with the other 11 disciples. It appears these people, among many others in the Bible, were given great opportunities and anointing but never did anything with it. The reason? Their anointing wasn't balanced with godly character. "Anointing and calling will take you places, but only godly character will keep you there", states Judy Jacobs in her book *Standing Strong*. The difference between finishing well as opposed to not finishing well is simply a character issue.

We all know how much pressure is involved with ministry. It's those pressures of life and ministry that will eventually reveal the true nature of our hearts. Without ongoing transformation of the heart, we may look good on the outside, but what is going on in the inside whether that is good, ugly or evil- will eventually be revealed. Time just has a way of doing that, doesn't it?

My heart's desire is to finish well, but what I'm realizing is: we don't really know when



our "finish" is going to be. A few weeks ago I attended a Guy Penrod concert. He made a statement that was very close to this: "One of the biggest lies of Satan is that he wants you to think you have plenty of time." With that in mind, I've been challenged to think, if the end of my ministry was today, would God say I finished well? I'm not so sure, but I do believe that every word in the Bible is true. My Bible tells me that today is a new day, God has new mercy available upon request, that I should forget the past and press toward my high calling. My Bible also tells me it is possible to finish well, that with His help all things are possible! **Hallelujah! If David got up, dusted off and finished well, so can I and so can you- if that's the sincere prayer of our hearts.**

The Lord has reminded me: to finish well, we have to focus on the basics taking one day at a time. Character is developed

slowly, but the effort has to be made daily. Nurturing our relationship with Christ has to be our number one priority. It's so easy to get bogged down with ministry and forget that He desires time with us more than our efforts of service. To build our godly character traits, we have to be willing to spend time in prayer, fasting and meditation. It's during our quiet times with the Lord that we become humble and teachable, thus developing godly character traits that will last a lifetime.

In addition to returning to the basics of nurturing our relationship with the Lord, we have to avoid pitfalls if we are to develop our character. Our relationship with God is the foundation for ministry, and integrity is the foundation of godly character. "Integrity involves the quality or state of being complete or undivided and involves a consistency between what we claim to believe and what we are and what we do." (Richard Clinton, Paul Leavenworth, *Starting Well*).

In other words, integrity is having godly character or doing the right thing when no one is watching. Common areas in which we are tempted to gamble with integrity are in the areas of finances, abuse of power, pride and sexual misconduct. If we are to finish well, we will have to guard our hearts and minds and be determined to flee temptation taking hold of our escape God promises to provide. As John C. Maxwell says, "Only in testing do people discover the nature and depth of their character. People can say anything they want about their values, but when the pressure is on, they discover what their values really are."

In 2011, my resolution is to daily work on *finishing well*. God has already called and anointed me to be a vessel of His love to a hopeless world. My prayer is to be a vessel of love as a lifestyle for a lifetime- something I *know* I can't accomplish on my own. If your heart's prayer is to "Finish Well", I would love to hear from you. My email address is: rhonda@sgnscoops.com. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year! 🇺🇸



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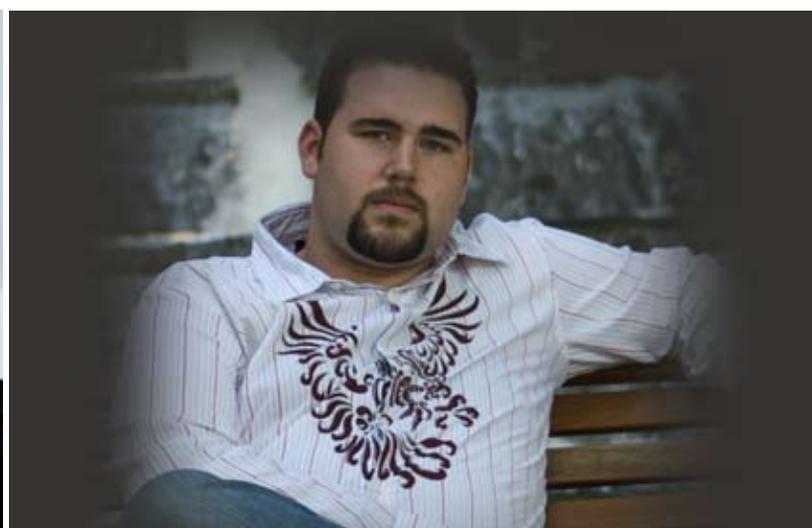
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Born and raised in southern Ontario, Canada, **LORRAINE WALKER** has been interested and involved in Southern Gospel Music since the mid-80s. Since 2005, she has also authored the popular 'Reality Check' column and other features for sgmradio.com.



MS. LOU WILLS HILDRETH is always smiling, is married to Howard, is a member of the legendary Wills family, a member of the Gospel Music Association Board, and a television host, songwriter, publisher, journalist, an industry leader. Get to know her at louhildreth.com



RHONDA FRYE is a full time minister of music serving the Lord in at least three different ways: teaching preschool music, serving her local congregation as worship leader and associate pastor, and as a singer/songwriter/recording artist. Rhonda lives in Ringgold, Georgia and is supported by her husband, Eric and their three children. rhondafrye.com



Through a series of events, **JEFF HAWES** has moved from the classroom where he taught high school English in Jackson County, Alabama to the tour bus of gospel great Karen Peck & New River. Jeff chronicles the fulfillment of his gospel music dreams and his road life exclusively for SGN Scoops. Learn more about him at karenpeckandnewriver.com



ROB PATZ is the owner & publisher of SGN Scoops along with the owner & voice of SGMRadio.com & The Southern Styles Show. He resides in Seattle and loves Jesus, music, food, people, and talking as a job and hobby. sgmradio.com



SG enthusiast **D. ANN BAILEY** has written for a number of industry publications. Currently she works as a senior manager and is part of a four generation household. She also serves on the advisory board of Harvest Hope Food Bank., allowing her to reach out to the community showing God's love not only in spiritual ways but helping to meet the physical needs as well. twitter.com/DeeAnnBailey



TOM HOLSTE is a writer living in Chicago and a graduate of Act One, a screenwriting program specifically geared toward Christians. He has written and directed numerous short scenes for church events. tomholste.com.



JENNIFER CAMPBELL returns to Scoops this month and we're happy to have her. She resides in Florida where she is a master English teacher and enjoys singing and writing gospel music. We invite you to read her rich testimony at her website. jennifercampbell.net



Christian Fitness Expert and author **LAURETTE WILLIS** is the Director of PraiseMoves, offering fitness programs, DVDs, books and training for those interested in a Christian alternative to yoga, and fitness for spirit, soul and body at www.praisemoves.com
twitter.com/Fit4Christ
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As a busy ventriloquist and comedian performing throughout North America and beyond, guest columnist **RYAN BOMGARDNER**'s mission is to provide clean entertainment for all ages and reach people who wouldn't normally go to church or get to hear the gospel message. He resides in Pennsylvania with his wife and online at ryanandfriends.com



During this special time of year, Scoops would like to share its heart: We send our

deepest sympathies to our sister Lorraine Walker, who lost her mother on October 31.

We also deeply thank all of our readers for making this magazine possible. Merry CHRISTmas to you & yours.



We welcome **SANDI DUNCAN-CLARK!**

Sandi grew up in Greenville, South Carolina where her father was a staunch Baptist minister. She and her siblings supported their father's ministry by singing and playing instruments in church. Those early years formulated her love for and desire to be a part of Southern Gospel music.

Sandi has been a journalist in the Southern Gospel music industry for more than thirty years. Her love for the music has allowed her to work with many of our heroes of the past, as well as current headlining artists. It is her greatest joy to contribute to the ministry of those who serve the Lord singing Southern Gospel.

With her husband, Cliff, Sandi makes her home in Easley, S. C., where she attends Westwood Church and does volunteer work. She recently retired from Macy's Department store after twenty seven years of retail. Sandi enjoys gardening, reading, writing and spending time with her son, Jeff and new daughter-in-law, Amanda. Sandi is excited and thrilled to be part of the *SGNScoops* family!



JIMMY MCMILLAN is a singer and songwriter who, with his wife Liz, owns the trio McMillan and Life. They are based in Symrna, TN and travel full time in gospel music ministry.
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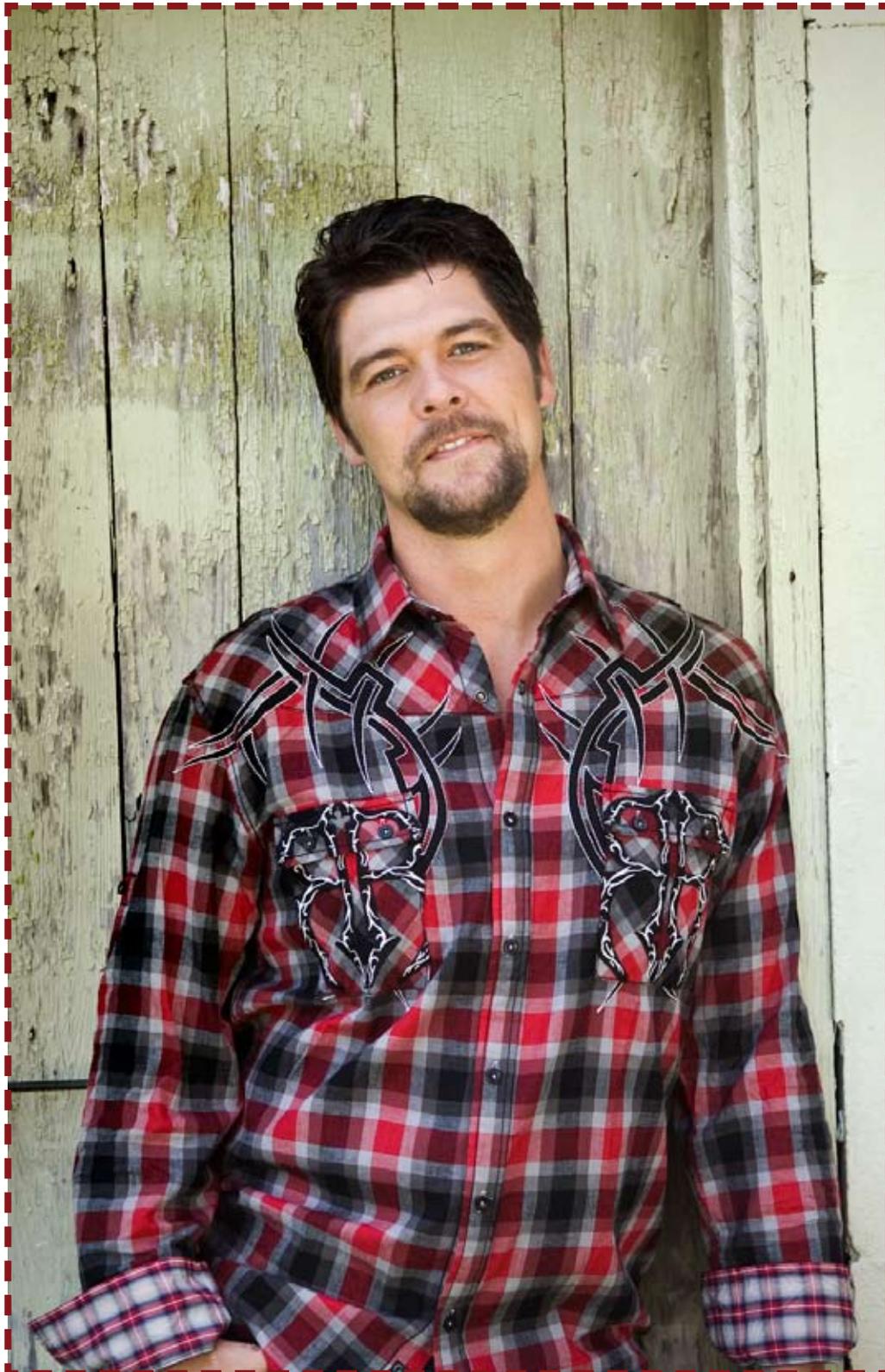
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Many Gifts

Celebrating with *Jason Crabb* as he discusses music, family, trials, and hunting!

By Rhonda Mitchell Frye



Many people stumble through life wondering if they are in God's will. There is no doubt in the world that Jason Crabb found his "Sweet Spot" early in life and has been living the life God intended to its fullest.

Jason's door of opportunity swung open at the young age of 14, then he exploded onto the Gospel Music scene with his family shortly after that. To say his musical journey has been exciting is an understatement. Jason's distinctive, bluesy tenor voice has rung out at Carnegie Hall and The Grand Ole Opry as well as large and small auditoriums and churches all over the world. He has performed on a regular basis with the Gaither Homecoming Video Series, performed at the Billy Graham Farewell Crusade, has worked with the famed Brooklyn Tabernacle Choir and has made numerous television appearances, including Trinity Broadcasting Network.

Jason's career has been nicely decorated with a host of No. #1 songs, as well as numerous nominations and awards.

Laying the foundation

In order to get to the place where Jason is today, he has overcome some obstacles. Growing up in Beaver Dam, Kentucky, it is safe to say Jason didn't "have it made" by any means.



"Well, you know the funny thing is, we grew up without some things, but there are a lot of people that were worse off than we ever thought about being," Jason said. "We never went hungry, it wasn't that bad, but we had to go without some things, but you know what... I wouldn't trade it for nothin' in the world, not one thing! Because it helps make me who I am today and appreciate what I have, appreciate what God has given me. We've worked hard but it's through Him that we are



blessed with what we have. So, yes, we grew up without some things, but we were fine. We had plenty of love to go around the house and you know - we had music to play and

listen to!"

Music was always part of his childhood, and his listening experiences were rich. "I grew up listening to all kinds of music, some gospel, some not," Jason says. "My dad was a country music *fanatic* and I love it too, you know. I just love some of the productions, love some of the singers. We grew up on George Jones, Verne Gosden and some of those groups like Alabama." "We listened to the Paynes, the Spencers, the Cooks, then later in life I was a huge fan of the Isaac's, the Martins and the Gaithers."

Until 2007, Jason traveled and claimed success with his family. Many great songs such as: "Trail of Tears", "Please Forgive Me", and "Greater Is He" came from his time spent on the road with his talented brothers and sisters. It's no secret that Jason enjoyed and still enjoys a special friendship with his siblings, however by 2007 change was stirring among all of their hearts as they began to feel the urge to pursue their own dreams.

Solo Ministry

With the retirement of The Crabb Family and initially feeling leery- not knowing how things would turn out, Crabb took a huge leap of faith by launching his solo ministry., which took flight with the release of his debut album Jason Crabb in June of 2009.

His self-titled debut album is filled with meaningful songs with the hurting in mind. Songs such as "Sometimes I Cry" and "Walk on Water" tug at the heart strings and provide encouragement for those whose backs are in a corner. Jason's hard work certainly paid off, for it earned him a prestigious Grammy Award for Best Southern/Country/Bluegrass Gospel Album at the 52nd Annual Grammy Awards Show at the Staples Center in Los Angeles, Calif. Jason said he has designated a special place in his home for the Grammy and is having a shelf built for its display

The Grammy experience is one Jason describes as "unreal!" He continues, "You have to realize, I'm from Beaver Dam, Kentucky! Boys from Beaver Dam, Kentucky just don't go to the Grammys "It was just unreal just to walk on that red carpet, EVERYBODY was there, everybody. It was a very big deal; I am so thankful and overwhelmed!"

Inspirations

Crabb has learned from his father, Gerald Crabb, that the best lyrics are rooted in real life, where real people live. Perhaps taking this advice is the reason Jason Crabb is adored and supported by so many fans. He has this unique way of interpreting real lyrics into the



From top of this page: Jason on the hunt; with wife Shellye; with daughters Ashleigh and Emma; the Christmas CD. Next page: At the 2010 Grammy Awards. Courtesy of Jason Crabb.



hearts of real people establishing a huge connection. Generally speaking, people see Jason Crabb as “real” and people latch on to that kind of authenticity.

Using the lyrics to connect with the audience seems to be only the first layer of connecting to the hearts of people. In concert, he brilliantly captivates attention and brings smiles of hope to faces as he transparently shares personal testimonial stories of hardship as well as victories. He responds to audience song requests and encourages audience participation as he sings old tunes or favorites from the Crabb Family days.

He sings with the same amount of intensity, feeling and zeal no matter how large or small the audience. At the product table following his concerts, he patiently signs autographs “as instructed”, listened to heartaches, smiled as if his cheeks weren’t tired, offered industry advice and freely extended appropriate displays of affection.

With much creativity, Crabb has found even other ways to connect to people. By going public with his great love for the outdoors, Jason has connected on a deeper level with existing fans and is extending his borders embracing new ones, including a chronicle of his hunting experiences on Facebook.

“I love it, don’t you?” says the outdoorsman. He loves to hunt and fish and has used this passion as a means to interact with others who share his love for the outdoors. Crabb established a “meeting place” on Facebook called “Cross Country Outdoors.” From this page, fans and others can post hunting and fishing pictures and discuss their experiences. With nearly 3500 people involved, it’s a hit!

Jason began hunting at a difficult period in his life, when his parents were going through a divorce. He explains, “There was a man who knew I was taking it very hard even though I was “playing” or masking the hurt. I was playing hard – a rebellious kid at 14 or 15 years old. He brought me over a box of shells and a shot gun and said, ‘You need to get in the woods!’ And... so that’s how my hunting got started- it was during that tough time, the hunting helped me through it.”

New releases

Jason Crabb recently released a Christmas album entitled: “Because It’s Christmas,” which Jason describes as “a little bit of everything,” traditional music and freshly written Christmas tunes.”

Jason’s face lit up as he talked about one song in particular. “There’s one on there called “Joseph;” it’s from a neat perspective from him. One of the lines

that gets me says, ‘Joseph, did you wanna pack your tools and head off to someplace where nobody whispered there goes Mary’s fool?... Joseph, did you wake up and want to scream- God are you really speaking to me through an angel in a dream?’ And then one of my favorite lines says, ‘Joseph it was you and no one else that God chose to take care of Mary and Himself.’

Jason is obviously passionate about the project, which was recorded mainly by his road band, and is now available online.

F o l -
 lowing a long-time dream, Jason Crabb has also published a book. Trusting God to Get You Through is Jason’s inspiring story incorporating the lyrics from “Through The Fire”



sharing lessons he's learned along the way. It is currently available on his website and will be in bookstores beginning in January.

"It's about stories about my life, stories about being on the road with the family and how God helped us get through some fires in life," Jason describes. "It's about my wife and kids, my ideas and thoughts... just a

book that you know I've wanted to do for a while. It talks about those beginnings and rough parts- just really my life... crazy stories... One is how we got hit by people (on the road) high on drugs!"

The gift of family

One doesn't have to sit in Crabb's presence long before his love for his family starts bubbling over. Jason and Shellye Crabb have been blessed with two adorable daughters, Ashleigh and Emma. Road life, however, keeps them separated some, and Jason was eager to share tips on how to keep the family strong.

"A wise man told me one time, 'it's not the quantity of time you spend, it's the quality of time that you spend when you're with them', and that's the truth!" Jason says. "The quality time will make you

miss home more and that's what a person needs because if they miss



We grew up without some things, but we were fine. We had plenty of love to go around the house ~ Jason

home, you don't have to wonder- so it's the quality of time that you spend with your family and spouse that has to be done. And that's what we try to do... we curl a lot of times on the couch, sit and watch TV, we order pizza, watch kids' movies, and fall asleep on the couch and all of us sleep there all night long. We did that last night before I left!"

Jason shares a special relationship with his siblings as well. He speaks of sisters Kelly and Terah's progress since The Bowling Family's July 1st bus accident: "They are doing well, in fact, we are getting ready to hop on a bus and go sing together during the next few weeks, on into January."

The Crabb Family Celebration Tour is in full swing now hitting approximately 15 cities during the next few weeks and into January. Anytime the Crabb Family performs

together it is special, but in light of the bus accident, this tour is even more meaningful. Big brother Jason played a very supportive role during the Bowlings recovery period and is responsible for helping raise support for them during that time.

There is also no doubt that he is living out the two greatest commandments given by Jesus himself- "Love God and Love People." On stage and off stage, Crabb transparently shares his faith. He finished our discussion speaking of what God is still teaching him right now:

"You know, the older ya get it seems like we get more dependent on ourselves, the younger we are, we're more dependent on Him. As we get older, we get more dependent on our works- our hard works. But, He's showing me that I have to stay leaning on Him and also leaning on everything that I have learned in the early parts of life- like in Sunday School and Church. Our relationship is really not just something we sing about; it's an everyday life, everyday walk. Through life, He's teaching me different things every single day. I can't really say it's just "one thing"- it's one thing one day and something else the next- but over all, He's teaching me dependence on Him." 🇺🇸

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The Gift of Love

...for a lifetime.

Sunday Edition's Amy Unthank reflects on her upcoming marriage to Ted Day

By Sandi Duncan-Clark

On Thursday December 9th, 2010, 7:30 PM, at River of Life Church in Smyrna, Tennessee, Amy Marie Unthank will walk down the aisle on the arm of her father, Deon. At the altar, Deon and his wife Susan will give Amy's hand in marriage to Ted Day. This will be one of the biggest moments in Amy's life, as she becomes Mrs. Amy Unthank Day. Many of Amy's and Ted's friends will join in the celebration as the young couple begins their journey of life together.

Amy Unthank is very well-known in Southern Gospel music circles, both as a performer and business owner. She, her father Deon and brother Chris perform as Sunday Edition. Amy and Chris are co-owners of South-

ern Spin Entertainment, a marketing firm based in Nashville, Tennessee. Amy is also a licensed cosmetologist.

Ted Day is originally from Harlan, Kentucky, but currently makes his home in Thompson Station, Ten-

nessee. He is in the retail business and manages two locally owned mattress stores. Ted is not involved in Southern Gospel music, however according to Amy, he is a huge "old-school" country music fan.

Amy shared their love story with us. "Ted and I actually met online in a Facebook chat," she shared. "Our first date was at a local restaurant here in Murfreesboro, Tennessee, and we hit it off right away. Neither of us wanted the date to end so we spent some time at Starbucks then went to a movie."

"Ted was a perfect gentleman, and he is so funny!"

Amy continued. "He is a total cutie and I thought he was way out of my league."

God always works things out for His children, and Amy said, "Ted says he knew after the first date that this was for real. I honestly knew for sure after the third date; that's when he asked if we could change our status on Facebook to "in a relationship!" And EVERYONE knows that once it's on Facebook, it's official," she laughed.

As with most young ladies, Amy had a list of things she wanted in a life partner. "It took me thirty two years to come up with this list, but it's one of values and character," she said. "Ted meets every single item on my list and more," she concluded.



The week of National Quartet Convention was a tough one for Amy. She was away from home all week, manning the Southern Spin/Sunday Edition/Southern Gospel News.com booth at NQC. "I really enjoy NQC, but couldn't

wait to get home the weekend after," Amy continued her story. "Ted couldn't come to convention because of work, and we hadn't seen each other all week. Ted had met with Dad to ask for my hand in marriage, and to show him the ring. Thankfully, Dad said yes!!"

"We had dinner at a quiet little secluded restaurant," Amy recalls. "I guess I kinda spoiled the romantic aspect of it, because he had put the ring on the table and I didn't even notice! It turned out perfectly, however, since it totally fit our personalities." And,



as they say, the rest is history!

Those of us on Facebook have followed Amy through her wedding preparations; selecting the dress, setting the date, and finishing her cosmetology degree. "It's all happening so fast but we are so excited," she said.

As for what the future holds for the young couple, Amy will continue her job at Salon 536, Murfreesboro, Tennessee. She will continue singing with Sunday Edition, but discontinue her work with Southern Spin Entertainment. Her brother Chris will continue to the company,

[Ted] had put the ring on the table and I didn't even notice!
- Amy

which handles publicity and press kits for Southern Gospel artists and organizations (including SGN Scoops and the Diamond Awards). Ted will continue his work in retail and the couple will make their home in Murfreesboro.

When asked about future plans, Amy smiled as she said, "Who knows! Maybe some kiddos...later! We are open to whatever God wants in our lives. We just want to have a good life and enjoy each other while we're on this earth. We both feel tremendously blessed to have found each other...we are a perfect fit!"

New love is always exciting and we wish Amy and Ted the very best as they begin their life together. Check out Amy's and Ted's wedding page at www.theknot.com/ourwedding/tedday&amyunthank. 🇺🇸

...and a marriage built on God.

Christy Sutherland & Matt Dudney

Interview by Rob Patz | Story by Lorraine Walker



Christy Sutherland and Matt Dudney are a Nashville fairy tale come true. But when you hear their story, you will soon realize it had nothing to do with fairies and everything to do with God.

Christy Sutherland is a singer/songwriter who began her musical career in a Texas church and dreaming of a country stage in Tennessee. Her singing and songwriting led her to a record contract and the Grand Old Opry. But an unexpected chapter in her story found her

under the lights at a department store, selling makeup and wondering what was next.

Matt Dudney, son of Barbara Mandrell, was born into a life of wealth and fame. In his teenage years, he succumbed to the lure of alcohol and drugs, which soon became chains of dependency and depression. Matt hit bottom when he almost burned down his aunt's home and checked himself into a rehabilitation center. A close encounter with the Holy Spirit turned his life around, enabling him to regain his career as a chef and begin to rebuild his life.

At this point, the stories of Christy and Matt begin to converge. They had met while in Belmont College 15 years prior when Matt asked Christy out on a date. Christy picks up the tale: "He invited me to his house to write songs and



The Gift of Love



Christy & Matt, cont'd

he couldn't write a song. It was just a line. But I went to his house when they lived at Fontanel. It was a pretty big deal you know, going to Barbara Mandrell's house, a home of over 27,000 square feet. I remember wondering how I would ever find the door. But I went there and I figured out pretty quick that Matt couldn't write a song. But he was really good looking and we had dinner and had a good time. Then I didn't hear from him or see him for fifteen years."

CHRISTY: [The morning of our first date] I asked the Sunday School class to pray him away because I thought I was in love with this man and I didn't really know him

Matt had a reputation even then and Christy says she wouldn't have dated him if he had asked her out again. Matt recalls that Christy was a good girl and he knew he should leave her alone. They had no thought that they would ever see each other again.

However, in 2005, Christy's career was suddenly going nowhere and Matt was two years into his recovery from alcohol addiction when their paths unexpectedly crossed once more. Christy says, "I had just lost my record deal with Sony Records and I took a job at Dillard's department store. Matt's sister, Jaime, is an actress and had just left the show *As The World Turns*, and she also worked at Dillard's selling makeup. Matt came into the store and asked me out. I said no because I remembered how wild he was. Then he asked me out again five minutes later and I said no again. Then he asked again and I gave in and said okay. That was June 12, 2005."

Christy continues, "I went over to his house on a Sunday night for dinner with the whole family. I don't know what was wrong with me, but I believe I started to fall in love with him that night. They were having a game night and everyone was sitting around the table playing games. Everything Matt said, I would agree with him, because I wanted to please him. He said, 'I like to go hunting', and I said, 'Me too!' And he said, 'I like to go camping' and I said, 'Oh, me too!' But I hate camping. Before I knew it, I just started telling lies and I didn't really mean to."

Matt laughs as he remembers that conversation and learning that Christy was a real 'rugged' woman who liked hiking, shooting and all of the same outdoors activities he enjoyed. He didn't realize that Christy wasn't being entirely truthful.

Christy says, "Two weeks later he called me and asked me to go shooting. I said, 'Well, there's something I need to tell you.' I had told him that I was a marksman. Well, I did get the marksman's patch in Brownies when I was nine. So there was some truth in everything I said. I'd been hunting once with my daddy. I told him I was terrified of guns but I did shoot a gun in Brownies. So he said, 'Is there anything else I should know?' I said, 'Yeah, I don't fish, hike, camp, or any of that. I understand if you don't want to go out with me. I don't know what was wrong with me; I just wanted to make you happy and I just started telling lies.'

Spending the evening surrounded by your new boyfriend's family might not be every girl's idea of a comfortable first date, but Christy says she loved it. "It was safe. A girl wants to feel safe. His family is wonderful. I was glad to see what I was getting into! However, I can't deny that it was terrifying eating meatloaf next to Barbara Mandrell."

Matt notes, "My mother tried to seat Christy next to me but I said I wanted her to sit across the table from me so I could watch her."

Matt and Christy's first date alone was sev- ➡

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eral days after. Christy says, "He called me and asked me on a date but he lived four hours away, so the day he was asking for was a couple of weeks away. So every night for those two weeks we talked on the phone, five or six hours, every night. He told me, 'Dating is just a formality, I'm going to marry you.'"

Matt and Christy learned a lot about each other during those first long phone conversations. Christy says, "The first week when we were on the phone every night, we were firing questions at each other, like, 'What do you believe about this?' We wanted to make sure we agreed on the things that matter."

Matt agrees, "It truly was amazing. You spend so much time dating somebody, trying to figure out who that person is. Christy had worked so hard figuring out who she was, through all the trials and troubles of having and losing a record deal."

Christy adds, "It was also through the other men I'd dated that I figured out what I wanted."

"You need to figure out who you are, not necessarily what your business card says you are," continues Matt.

MATT: What I've learned from my family, more than anything, is that you may not always 'like' whomever it is that you are married to, but you do love that person.

"For me, I'd come out of being in recovery for a couple of years. I knew who I was and what I was looking for. I was married for seven whole months in 2000. The truth is, I was never going to be married again and I was never going to have children. All of that changed instantly. I knew it was God. I had thought of it as a burden instead of a privilege."

After all of this conversation for two weeks, Christy was nervous about that first date on the Fourth of July. "That morning at church I had asked the Sunday School class to pray him away because I thought I was in love with this man and I didn't really know him."

Then came the date. "The first thing Matt did when I opened the door and gave him a hug, was to start praying over me, praying that God's will would be done on our date and asking for His protection. As soon as he said 'Amen' I just kissed him." Christy smiles, "I did go shooting with him. He taught me how to shoot a gun and we had a great time. I enjoyed the shooting lesson. He put his arms around me and showed me how to hold the gun."

Christy continues, "The Fourth of July date was so awesome because after we shot targets, he took me to dinner and then he gave me my very own hour-long fireworks show up on the ridge. It was the most romantic thing anyone has ever done for me."

Matt jokes, "She just didn't realize that I liked to shoot fireworks. It could have been somebody I didn't even like there, I still would have done it."

Matt continues, a little more seriously, "Every year for the Fourth of July we try to do something together. We haven't worked on a Fourth of July yet. Christy sang on the Grand Ole Opry, but that was it. We always try to be home in Nashville and go out and do something together. We didn't do the private fireworks last year as we couldn't afford it. The first fireworks show, I spent \$400 on fireworks." Matt laughs, "Now that I'm married, I can't afford even the little snappers that you throw on the ground!"

The successful fireworks date led to a quick courtship. "He proposed New Year's Eve. We would have been married a lot sooner but his daddy asked us to wait a year, so we did." Matt says, "We waited a year and ten days, from our first alone date." The couple was married on July 14, 2006.

"I proposed to Christy on the very last per-

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formance at the Louise Mandrell Theatre on New Year's Eve," says Matt. "We got married in my mother's garden." Christy adds, "The first night that I had dinner with his family, we walked out into the garden and I said, 'This would be a perfect place for a wedding.' I had no idea it was going to be my wedding!"

Christy says, "When I met Matt he was truly living for the Lord. He had turned over his life completely to Jesus Christ. When it's right, it's right. We had peace immediately."

Matt adds, "As a result of those two weeks of incredibly long phone conversations, we knew who each other were before we ever went on our first date. There was such a foundation there to build on for Christy and I together. We had that from our roots. Our foundation with each other really took hold and the seed took root over those two weeks of long conversations."

Christy's career is now firmly established once again and the artist is winning awards for her songwriting and singing. Matt has exchanged his chef's hat for a manager's cap, looking after Christy's career and scheduling. This marriage has made each of them stronger and they are enjoying their new life together, committed to making their relationship work.

Both Matt's and Christy's parents have been married for over 40 years, and their foundation of commitment has been an example to the young couple that they are trying to emulate. Christy says, "What I see from my parents, and I'm still learning this, is that you have to let some things go. Any time two people are living together, they are going to do things that annoy each other. You choose your battles. And, you need to be kind to each other. Something I've learned from your

parents, Matt, is that you stick together no matter what. Look at the car wreck, and all that your daddy went through, taking care of your mother all those years."

Matt agrees, "Marriage is forever. It's a covenant between a husband and wife. What I've learned from my family, more than anything, is that you may not always 'like' whomever it is that you are married to, but you do love that person. 'Likes' come and go. That might be a one-hour thing or a weeklong thing, but you always love that person. Because of that underlying love you can forgive them. You can fight through whatever adversities you come to, if you stand together. But if you don't stand together and continue to love each other through it, then the foundation breaks. I think that's why there is so much divorce in our country today. People don't build a foundation and if they aren't stand-

ing on something strong enough, any little breeze can blow by, or something come between them, and it's easy to break up the marriage."

"We saw a Christian counselor for premarital counseling and after we were married for a year we went back, for a 'check-up'" adds Christy. "It is important to have Godly counsel." Beginning their relationship with prayer and their marriage with Christian counseling helped to firm the foundation of faith that existed between them.

Matt says, "As a Christian, if we didn't place our belief in Jesus Christ, then we probably wouldn't be married today.

Because the way the world attacks marriage, if you don't stand firm and hold on to your Christian values, I don't know how any marriage survives today. There are good people out there who aren't Christians, but there is such forgiveness and grace in what we hold dear."

Christy concludes, "It takes Somebody greater than ourselves to keep our marriage together." 



*"A Denzel, George Clooney,
I'll never be. But I've got
the Son of God lookin'
after me."*

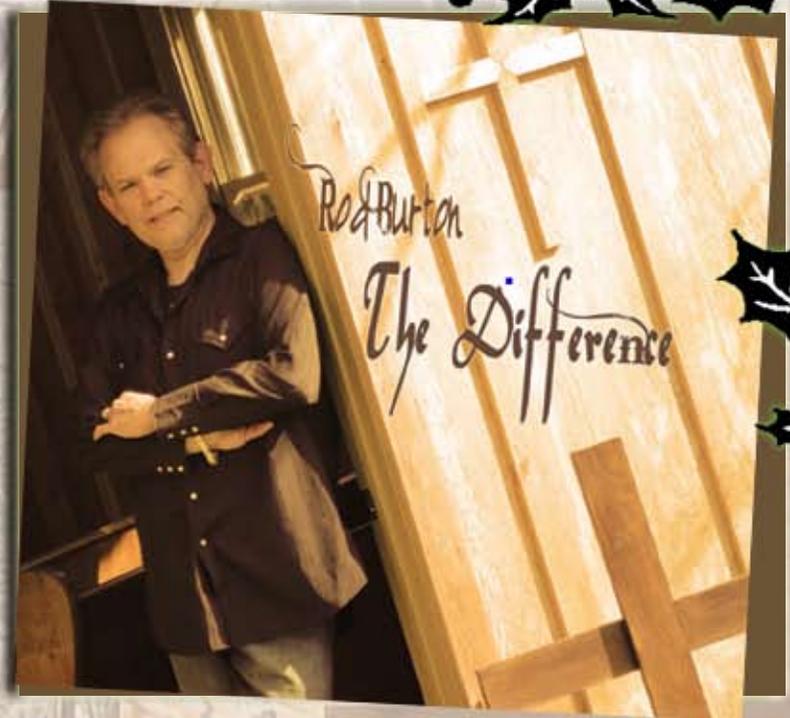
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parental love & Christmas

“I have so much unconditional love for Joseph. It doesn’t matter how upset he makes me, I still love him. That is how God loves us. We may disappoint him, but He still loves us.”

– **Susan Peck Jackson**

“I remember one Christmas when I was 13 years old. There were lots of presents under our family tree. As most children, I was counting the number of presents and noticed that my brother Todd had quite a few more than me! To be honest, I remember being a little disappointed and started to feel a little sorry for myself. After we opened all of our presents, Daddy told me to take a real close look inside the Christmas Tree! Much to my surprise, hidden deep inside those branches was the most beautiful diamond ring! It was my very first!

Daddy had saved the best gift for the last! That is just like our Heavenly Father. For those of



us that know Christ as Savior, He has saved the best for last. We hold to the promise that as we walk through trials down here, a better day awaits, and God’s best will last forever!”

– **Kelly Nelon Clark**

“It is great traveling with my parents every week and getting to know them better than most people do. The love of my parents shows me more every day what the love of God is. Thanksgiving [and Christmas] time is always a great time to remind me of that.”

– **Matthew Gooch**

“I have many times stopped and thought about how much I love my children, and yet, God’s love for me is even greater. There’s nothing I wouldn’t do within my power, to make life better for my three kids, and I truly believe our Heavenly Father wants the best for us, and of course that starts by making HIM #1 and trusting His guidance through life.” – **Debra Shepherd**

“When I think of the love that Jesus has for me I am reminded of my father who went to Heaven a few years ago. I was his only daughter, his “Baby Girl” and he thought I hung the moon! Just before he went to heaven he went to one



The Gift of Love

By Jennifer Campbell

Did you ever notice the way some children really look at their mother or father? Their eyes become wide, their lips gently separate, and their head tilts upward ever-so-slightly. It’s as if they will hang on to every word spoken and record every move their parent makes in their permanent memory bank. This devotion is the result of a wondrous gift from God: the gift of love between a parent and child.

A parent does nothing special to earn this kind of love. They just have to be there. A parent has to be there to wipe a runny nose, bandage a scraped knee, or help mend a broken heart. They need to be there to cheer and clap for their child in times of victory and to cradle and comfort them in times of defeat.

As we grow older, we realize that parental love is often more important as an adult than it was as a child. There comes a time that we may be faced with the difficult task of coping with the loss of a loved one, maybe even our parents. In these times of distress, we long for the moment that we can look up into the face of our mother or father.

Having lost my mom in August 2008, not a moment goes by that I do not long for one more embrace, one more conversation, and one more “I love you.” Through the love of my earthly father, I find happiness and joy in the bond we have as father and daughter. And I will forever be grateful for the love of my Heavenly Father, as He gives me love, peace, and hope, along with the reassurance that I will see my Mom in Heaven one sweet day.

God knew that His children would experience a special bond with our parents. He also knew that we would eventually encounter the loss of one or both of our parents. That is why He gave us His only Son.

Whether you are young or old, the Heavenly Father is waiting with open arms to cheer you on in times of joy and cradle you gently in times of sorrow. Although sickness and death may temporarily separate us from our earthly parents, there is absolutely nothing in this world that can separate us from God’s enduring love.

Romans 8:38-39 (NIV) states, “For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation,

...between parents & children

will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus."

Regardless of what is going on around us, there is nothing that can separate



us from God's love, if we have turned our lives over to Jesus Christ. While the bond between a mother and child or father and child is extraordinarily strong, the relationship we have with Jesus Christ is greater than any relationship that any two individuals can experience here on earth.

This Christmas season, make a point to reflect on the ways the love of God permeates your own life. Take a moment to thank God for this love. He shows it to you every morning when you awaken to a brand new day. His love shines in each and every sunrise and sunset. His love is present in a church on Christmas morning, among the carolers walking down the sidewalk, and even the bell ringer who faithfully stands in front of the local department store. God's love is revealed everywhere.

Take time to really look at your Heavenly Father. Let your eyes become wide, your lips gently separate, and your head tilt upward ever-so-slightly. Listen for His still, small voice, and record it in your permanent memory bank. He longs to wipe your tears, fill your heart with joy, and be a friend who is closer than a brother.

Let God's love be revealed in your own life. Smile more. Pray often. Share the love of God. You have been given two wondrous gifts from God to share with the world: the gift of love between a parent and child and the greater love between a child of God and our Heavenly Father. 🇺🇸

of my concerts and my brother told the story of my Dad turning to him and asking, "How much do you reckon they are payin' her tonight?" Well, that seems like a funny story and it is, but when I thought about it, I came to understand a great truth. My earthly Dad loved me so much that in his opinion, no matter what I was being paid it was not enough. He thought I was



worth more than I could be paid! He thought I was worth everything! Wouldn't that make him a lot like our Heavenly Father who thought we were worth giving his Son? The Ultimate Love. He thought we were worth it! I have a daughter and two granddaughters, and I now understand fully that kind of selfless love. Love that would give it all...that kind of love is given freely to us all by our Heavenly Father! Hallelujah!" – **Sue Dodge**

"At an early age, I knew beyond any doubt that the Lord's love surpassed all understanding. There had been a terrible car crash that almost took the lives of some of my family. I watched my mother, her family, and especially my Granny Brown as they fasted and prayed through this tragedy. Our hurt family members were told they would never walk again, and doctors were afraid they wouldn't live. But I'll never forget the day I was standing in the kitchen and the front door swung open with sounds of laughter. There stood my family, not only alive, they were walking! - proof of the Lord's healing power. At 8 years old, I stood amazed and knew through the prayers of family, and especially a devoted mother, the Lord had healed them. That one experience truly showed me the undeniable love of a mother. Yet, until I had my own children, I couldn't fully understand how much my own mother loved me, not to mention the even more powerful love of my Heavenly Father. Now, when my children have a trial and their faith falters a little, I just remind them of how much they unconditionally love their own and to try to image that the Lord loves His children even more than that! It's sometimes hard to grasp that the unconditional and overwhelming love we feel for our children could possibly be surpassed, but it is, by Him!" – **Evie Hawkins**



The Gift of Love ...Again

Jerry & Jan Goff found
 love after loss, together

By Sandi Duncan-Clark

For many years, Dr. Jerry Goff has thrilled audiences across the country with his dynamic speaking, his high-energy music both vocally and on the trumpet, and his anointed song writing. Likewise, Lil' Jan Buckner, the petite, spirited singer with Wendy Bagwell and the Sunliters, has owned the hearts of Gospel music fans across the nation her entire life in Gospel music. Her singing and songwriting helped shape the career of the Sunliters: Wendy, Jerri and

Jan. On April 7th, 2005, these two fan-favorites became husband and wife and joined their hearts and their talents in a Gift Of Love, to share with us all.

"We each lost our spouses of many years; Jan's husband, Ronnie passed away suddenly in 1998, and my wife, Miss Ina, passed away in 2000, following a struggle with cancer. Jan and I knew of each other through our work in Gospel music, however we were not close friends," Jerry shared.

"In August of 2004, we were on the same program and when I saw her walk through the curtain to perform I realized what a lovely, dear lady she was and I knew that I wanted to know her better," He continued. "We began going out and after our wedding on April 7th, enjoyed a two week Mediterranean cruise honeymoon. We have enjoyed many new adventures since our wedding, and love the Gift of Love God has granted us."

In pondering "The Gift Of Love," Jerry and Jan shared, "To us, our finding new love together, was a like a new birth for us.

Jan related, "Within a short time I lost the two most important men in my life, my husband Ronnie and Wendy Bagwell. I didn't know what God wanted for me and was dealing with the uncertainty. Then when God brought Jerry into my world, it was like He breathed new life into my being."

Jerry continued, "My life with Miss Ina was a joy but without her life was a struggle. When Jan came into my life it was a breath of fresh air, a new lease on life. God gave us, together, a new love; a new birth. That was God's gift of love to Jan and me, and yet, God's gift of love to each of us is a new birth when we accept Christ as our Savior. That was God's purpose of sending His love in the form His Son to earth...to give us his Gift of Love and new life."

Jerry and Lil' Jan continue to encourage, entertain and minister to audiences wherever God takes them. Their testimony of their "Gift of Love...and new Birth" is a blessing to fans and friends everywhere. But sure that you visit with them when Jerry and Lil' Jan Buckner-Goff are in your area! 🇺🇸

Sometimes God brings love into your life unexpectedly. It's not a loud noise or a flash of lighting as much as it is a gentle hug with a reassurance that you have found something special. That is the way the love story of Madison Easter and Shannon Norman was.

"Madison and I have always lived in the same town, attended the same school, and participated in many of the same extra-curricular events," said Shannon. In August of 2004 our youth group was in charge of providing entertainment for our county's youth rally."

Now when your family travels in a gospel group, you don't get to attend many weekend activities at home. But what some would call fate, but we know as God's intervention, Madison was home. "Since he was home he was able to be a part of the preparations and the rally. Through rehearsals, Madison and I began talking more and we developed a strong friendship."

It is often said the best relationships are first good friendships. Shannon goes on to share, "We began dating on October 26th of that year and our relationship continued to grow. Almost 2 years later on October 13th of 2008 he proposed." Shannon and Madison are a great example of tak-

ing your time and getting to know each other. They know that relationships don't just happen they are built and they are built through experience. Experience can give you memories for the days ahead.

"One of my favorite memories is a time we spent at a cabin by Lake Tahoe a couple of years ago," Madison says. "We were wrapping up the Gaither west coast tour and we decided we'd take a day off by

the lake. Keep in mind, it was November, so beach fun was out of the question. But that didn't stop our entire group from having a great time. Shan and I got to walk the beach and admire the beauty of the mountains. We were bundled up because of the cold but the moment was special. Nothing really significant happened on that trip, it just really sticks out in my mind as one of my favorite memories."



The Gift of Love



By Dee Ann Bailey

Just as the love of our Father can be often be shown to us without fanfare or flourish, a strong relationship can often be described by the tangible

moments where your heart hears the voice you are longing for. It can be

much like the still small voice that you hear as you build a relationship with our Father.

"We have so many wonderful memories, but my most recent favorite comes from my 20th birthday,"

Shannon tells us. Madison showed up at my house to pick me up with a dozen red roses and a gorgeous pair of ear rings. He took me to eat at an intimate little French restaurant called La Maison on Telfair. We spent the evening simply enjoying each others company."



Opposite page: The couple during a winter break. At right: inside the Sacred Heart Cultural Center.

They have learned that love isn't reliant on the shooting stars and hearing bells ring. Rather it is the minutes stolen to enjoy each other's company, the looks that you each understand or the times that words aren't necessary. Love is a decision, you don't fall into it, you chose it. And once you have chosen it, you must cherish it and protect it with all your heart.

Now it is almost time for the wedding. A beautiful wedding in an old building with character and history just as their love is. "On December 12th, we will be married at the Sacred Heart Cultural Center in Augusta, GA. The building, built in 1897 was a Catholic church for over 70 years. The wedding will embrace the warmth of Christmas and include a simple ceremony and reception immediately following," Shannon tells. "Then we have a wonderful honeymoon in Paris and London for 6 days."

The couple will then rejoin the Easters and continue doing what God has called them to do. They have taken their time; they have watched their love grow. They watered and fed it, they allowed God to lead in it. After that time, now they are seeing their love reach new levels and they will continue to walk those steps together. 🇮🇹

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 **The Gift of Love**

...finding joy in grief.
The Quicks

By Jimmy McMillan

A few weeks ago I sat down with The Quicks over supper. Ten years ago when I met them, they were living in Florida and I was traveling with the Wilburns. Today we only live a couple of miles from one another, and yet the busy-ness of life has made it so that we generally have "quick catch-up sessions" when we run into one another at one event or another in town. This was a rare opportunity for both of us, and we were going to make the most of it!

Tim, Sally and Rebecca Quick met us at Cheddars (yay!) for supper. We spent a good hour laughing, talking, eating and generally having a great time. As everyone's plate approached the point of empty, Sally said "so what exactly is this interview thing all about anyway?" True to form she wanted to get down to business. (Good thing because Tim and I would probably have just carried on like a couple juveniles till they threw us out and closed for the night.)

I told them I wanted to let people know who The Quicks are and what their ministry is all about. I said I would try not to make it too painful but couldn't promise anything. "Let's start with an easy one," I said. "What is the mission statement of your ministry?"

Sally said that is probably the one question she disliked answering the most. "Our ministry is not something we can define or confine to one statement," she said. "The way we minister is seasonal. What I mean is we go through seasons in our lives, and the way we minister tends to pretty 



Clockwise from left: The Quicks, 2010; showing some of their zany side; with daughter Rachel for an earlier CD cover.



well be a direct reflection of our current season.”

I asked for some specific examples of what she meant, and what came next made me see my old friends in a whole new way.

“Right now,” she said “we are in a season of healing, forgiveness and learning to accept God’s will, no matter what. We’re sharing things in services that we never dreamed we would. We’ve always focused on the need for a personal relationship with the Lord, but that definition has taken on a whole new reality for us.

“Tim has a disease called alpha 1 antitripsyn. Try to say that 10 times fast. It is basically a genetic form of CLPD, and it’s incurable. The doctors have said for years that he shouldn’t be here, but he has maintained an amazing 30 percent of his lung capacity for over 10 years. There is no way that he should be singing today if not for God’s grace and Tim’s generous allotment of hot air.”

They tell me how they have used this illness as an example and pathway to sharing the reality of God: The fact that He gives us the strength we need as we need it; The truth that He is far more powerful than any illness.

All of these truths would be tested once again when this family had to walk into the darkest hours of their lives a year ago. It was a time that would challenge the heart, mind and spirit of every member of their family.

A year ago, their oldest daughter Rachael and her husband Aaron were expecting her first child, and the world was full of hope. When little Braxton was born, the whole Quick clan was there and their joy

was palpable. No one had any idea that just three days later their joy would turn to heartbreak when he passed away in the night.

Confusion, heartbreak, anger and huge questions were just some of the emotions that engulfed the family immediately. Here one minute and then taken suddenly, without warning, and for seemingly no reason.

They soon found out there was not only a reason, but that their loss was due to a little known but preventable disorder. Braxton was born with MCAT, a disorder that does not allow the body to absorb and retain proper nutrition from food. This disorder makes it necessary to feed a baby far more often than usual, and when the infant is not fed, his or her body simply shuts down from malnutrition. There is a test for MCAT but it is not administered on a regular basis to all children.

This last year has been a long journey, Sally said.

“The subject of losing a child is one that is not necessarily off limits but it’s dangerous ground,” she said. “Do you give condolences and try to console the grieving parent? Or does that just tear at an already gaping wound? Do you simply ignore or avoid the subject? Or does that leave the parents alone in a private world of pain with no way to vent and allow the wound to drain and eventually heal?”

Sally Quick on grieving parents:

‘Don’t try to ignore something that is real: their loss, their grief and their pain.’

The answer, she said is to “reach out to grieving parents. Let them talk about what they want or need to and just listen compassionately. Let them know you love them, that you are there for them and that they are not alone. Don’t try to ignore something that is real: their loss, their grief and their pain.”

Tim said this time affected him personally. “I was mad--angrier than I have ever been in my life,” he said. “I found myself in a dark place, where anger turns to depression, and I was ready to give up. I couldn’t understand how the God I love, serve and tell people about could allow this to happen to our family.”

He went on to say that one day while he was practicing the song “Be Still My Soul” for their new project, God spoke to him and reminded him to be still and know that God is God, to take comfort in the fact that He had a plan and everything was under His control. Tim said that from that point on he felt peace and was able to begin really moving forward.

Rebecca, the Quicks’ youngest daughter, still travels and sings with them. She is a student in her senior year at MTSU in Murfreesboro, Tennessee. Between school, singing and her fiancé Justin, she definitely has a full plate.

When I asked Rebecca what made her decide to keep singing with her



QUICKS | cont'd

parents even with all of her other responsibilities, her answer was a little surprising for someone her age.

"I had been battling with that very decision for a while, especially after the loss of my nephew," she said. "My parents knew I had questions and was struggling and they were praying with me about it.

"A few weeks ago, I was alone in my car, and I was listening to our new project and when my song 'I'm Not Tired Yet' played, I suddenly realized that I wasn't tired yet. I knew that God still had a place for me in this ministry. I called my mom and told her I had gotten my answer."

Sally went on to say: "This ex-

perience has caused us to make a decision to share even more deeply from our hearts. We talk about the pain, the moments of doubt and real anger we've walked through and how God has walked with us every step of the way. We talk about the importance of not leaving grieving parents 'alone' to walk through their pain.

"It's really important to us to make people aware of MCAT. It is a disorder that has a devastating effect and can be detected with a simple test. It's not that we are on a campaign, but we share hoping our story might play a part in saving one child's life and in turn spare one family the horrible pain of losing a child."

In addition to sharing openly and

honestly from the platform, The Quicks make a strong presentation of the gospel in every concert.

"We can talk about anything and share every experience of our lives, but when it's all said and done, our calling is to share the message of the gospel with hurting people in a lost and dying world," Sally said.

The Quicks are doing just that. With a new project, many new insights, and a renewed fervor for ministry, they are off and running like never before.

Now they do it with an added blessing: n Aug. 24, 2010, Rachael and Aaron were blessed with a beautiful baby girl named Zoe Ann. The name Zoe comes from a Greek word which means...*life*. 🇺🇸

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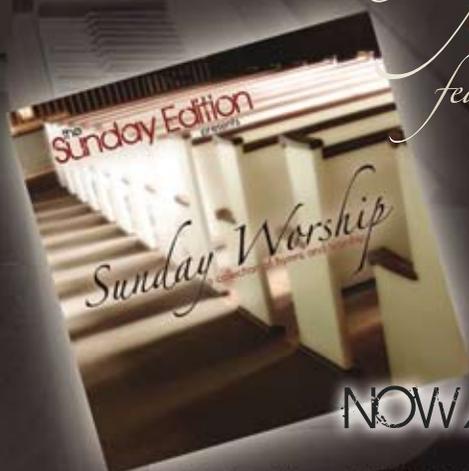
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Thanks for requesting
 our single "Mercy
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Most couples include the same values and ideals in their wedding vows, and many use the same words. "For better and for worse, in sickness and in health," are fairly universal promises in a marriage ceremony.

Some couples, however, face more of a certain kind of adversity than others. This year, Dale and Cheryl Golden are starting down a road paved with cancer... for the third time in 10 years. Having survived survived pancreatic cancer in 2000 and melanoma in 2006, Dale was diagnosed with tongue-base and thyroid cancers early this fall.

Dale's response to catastrophic-sounding news has been largely positive, as evidenced by his Facebook posts and his weekly radio show, Godpraise (on Texas-based KBJs www.kbjs.org). He writes, "[Faith is] not about how you feel! We all fall short at times and wallow in our own misery! Faith is about trusting and believing when you don't feel like it! You haven't failed when you falter! So pray up, stand up, and look up! Help is on the way!"

Cheryl is a positive presence as well, posting scripture on her own site and encouraging words to Dale on his. Her quiet determination is to care for her husband of 27 years and her singing partner of 15 years.

"When Dale was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer 10 years ago, our children were young," Cheryl recalls. (The Golden's have three now-grown sons, Dale Jr., Stefan, and Daniel, as well as two granddaughters, nine-year-old Adrianna and two-year-old Breeana). "I found my-

self trying to protect them from a lot of things that were going on with their Dad. It was a distraction for me trying to keep things 'normal' for them. My focus was split between Dale and the children."

But Cheryl contends, "This time is different. My focus is on Dale, and I want to be everything that He needs me to be. I promised before God that in sickness and health, for better or for worse, I would be there!"

Due to the nature of Dale's current treatments, the couple's future in music ministry remains an unfolding story. The story they've already lived is an indication of how they will handle the uncertainty of the future.

Dale and Cheryl grew up together, but lost touch after high school. It was back at a high school football game where they reconnected.

"She asked me to come sit in the stands with her and talk, but I was trying to play it cool," Dale says. "So I said I had a couple of things to do and would check her in a bit. Of course, I wasted no time in finding her in the stands. There was already a guy that had a possum-eating-a-green-persimmon grin on his face already sitting beside her, but I implemented my alpha-male voice and commanded him to "coot over. He did! HaHa!"

Chatting that night led to a date the next night, and the two have been together ever since.

Dale and Cheryl were married in 1983 and began raising their family. Somewhere in there, Cheryl,

The Gift
 of Love



Dale & Cheryl Golden
 ... in health,
 in sickness



By Kelly Capriotti Burton

who had felt a call into ministry at the age of 15, had a revelation: "God reminded me that he would not honor my singing 'in the world', because He gave me had vowed to use

After many years Dale and I sur-our lives together Ministry in Febru- "Our ministry [possible] be-Cheryl," Dale was raised in playing the piano She was sing- sionally when we ried and gave that a family. After the a little older, she start singing more



Dale and Cheryl singing in Branson, July 2010.

spots at church and we decided to search for avenues for her to sing. I booked a little church near home that had a regular singing every month and blew her mind when I told her I wanted to sing a song with her. I had never sung anywhere, anytime, for anyone. She was speechless!"

After that initial event, the Golden's were invited to sing at a Valentine's banquet, for which they had to borrow a sound system. "A few days later, we received a call from a concert promoter asking us to front a Gospel group called The Kingsmen. Yep, those Kingsmen!" Dale says. "So the third time I ever sang in front of anyone, we were singing to about 1000 people fronting the Kingsmen!"

From that point, Dale and Cheryl Golden went on to record nine studio albums (with a tenth in progress), to write over 160 songs, sing in churches and venues across the country (they are featured annually in the Branson Gospel Music Revival), and host the GODPRAISE radio show. They have been honored with several awards, but, "Most importantly," Dale says, "We have seen lives changed and souls saved many times in our services!"

As the couple prepares for Dale's treatment to continue, they also are preparing for a special Christmas celebration. The Golden's participate in community drives to collect food, coats, and toys for those in need, and Cheryl loves to decorate. "I enjoy sharing the beauty of Christmas with others," she says.

"Christmas at our house is a time to focus on family and remember the only thing that matters about Christmas...the gift of Christ and what He would mean for the world!," Dale adds. "The birth of Christ would come

to represent the re-birth of our HOPE, the "Starting Place" (I have a song entitled this) for God's gift of grace!"

a gift and I it for Him. of praying, rendered to the Music ary, 1995." is largely cause of says. "She Church, and singing. ing profes- were mar- up to raise kids were wanted to than guest

Dale's cancer treatments, which have already involved having 12 teeth removed and will move to radiation soon, will continue through the holiday season. Dale and Cheryl remain steadfast together in their faith during the trial, and plan to minister when they can.

"We are examples of how God can use anyone with a willing heart!" Dale says. "I remember the moment when I sincerely asked God to use me to touch people with music the way it reached me and lifted me up. He has and I am so honored and thankful!"

Cheryl, her husband's biggest fan, looks at this time as one of growth. "As for me, personally, my idea of love hasn't changed, but, I can truthfully say that it is stronger today than ever! We go

God uses trials to grow us where we need to grow and in that, we can be reminded to let those that you love know it!
 - Cheryl Golden

through our lives, and so often we take for granted the people that we love! God uses trials to grow us where we need to grow

and in that, we can be reminded to let those that you love know it!"

Dale echoes his wife's urgency: "If there is one thing I know from where I have been and currently am, it is that life is very short, very fragile and very precious. There is NO time to waste, no time to squander. Live and love to the fullest." May God bless the Golden's as they do just that. 🇺🇸

LIKE MOST OTHER KIDS, CHRISTMAS FOR ME WAS DEFINITELY THE MOST WONDERFUL TIME OF THE YEAR. THE START OF THE CHRISTMAS SEASON ALWAYS BEGAN ON THANKSGIVING DAY. WHILE THE REST OF THE COUNTRY WATCHED FOOTBALL OR THE MACY'S THANKSGIVING DAY PARADE, WE HAD MUCH MORE IMPORTANT THINGS TO DO! FOR ON THAT DAY, THE DECORATION BOXES DESCENDED FROM THE ATTIC AND THE HALL BEGAN TO BE DECKED!

We had a huge porcelain Christmas village with horse drawn sleighs, intricately detailed figurines, and cozily lit homes. I spent hours perfecting frozen lakes (tin foil) and sledding hills (stacked shoe boxes), and trying to figure out why the lights inside the houses didn't work! I also remember Christmas Eve when we'd stay overnight at my Grandmother's house. The only thing more abundant than her stocking stuffers was her food! Trust me when I say that my grandmother's Christmas dinner would put Rachael Ray to shame! And her secret highly-guarded ingredient that made everything taste better... "an extra stick of butter." Shhhh!

After finishing a dinner with more calories than Jenny Craig probably ingested in her lifetime, we'd act out the Christmas story. The Christmas story always seemed to come alive with my brother and sister as Mary and Joseph, our pet dog being a sheep, and my dad as a wise man with a bath towel wrapped around his head. How he learned the secret to "towel wrapping" still remains a mystery to this day.

One of my other childhood memories of Christmas was our very unique way of gift opening. We'd unwrap one gift each time the clock chimed in a new hour. It didn't take me long to discover how to move the clock hands ahead. Literally, time flew as the night passed from 5 PM to 10 PM in less than 60 minutes! I'd always save the best for last... the biggest present! Somehow bigger meant better... even if it turned out to be plastic bowling set, size was the most important thing (monetary value was of no importance)!

Times do change. Size still matters, except the size that I now hope for is a very small envelope with a bank's name on the outside. Now that I'm an adult, these gifts are wonderful and can be used to put gas in the car or pay the water bill. I would've been devastated to receive an envelope at age 8 with a certificate that said "This certificate entitles you to 3 free months of heat". Should I receive that this year, I will be jumping for joy!

Well, I'm all grown up. We just read the Christmas story instead of act-



A Humorous Pause

BY RYAN BOMGARDNER

ing it out. We don't stay overnight at Grandma's anymore. We don't open gifts on the hour. We don't tape home videos of everyone opening every gift they get (mainly because we always fast-forward the 'gift openings' when we watch home videos). Now I make memories with my wife, memories of decorating our own house on Thanksgiving, and laughing with our families. I don't have a Christmas village anymore... just one little ceramic house with a light bulb that seems to burn out every week. That's ok. I still love Christmas. I'll always have those great memories of the past and look forward to memories yet to be made. May God bless us... everyone. 🇺🇸

Ryan Bomgardner

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Ask any of the members of 4 The Lord Quartet, and they will be quick to tell you that they do not sing to create beautiful harmonies, they do not sing to procure fortune, and fame, and they do not sing to have the opportunity to travel across the country.

4 The Lord Quartet sings to share the good news of the gospel with those who haven't heard it, and to bring joy and encouragement to believers. Maurice, Bill, Dick, and Tom have joined forces to minister in song to the lost, the discouraged, and to anyone God may place in their path. Hailing from Mechanicsville, Virginia, 4 The Lord Quartet sings for a single purpose: to sing for the Lord.

During the summer of 2003, a church's mixed chorale group went on summer break. Four members of this chorale group were determined to continue fostering their love of singing. As soon as someone suggested

Singing...

4 THE LORD

By Jennifer Campbell

is the moment when 4 The Lord Quartet officially began their successful journey into Southern Gospel music. This genre of music was the niche where they truly shined, and as they say, the rest is history.

Since they began their musical journey, they have found themselves on numerous platforms, sharing the joy of the Lord with audiences far and wide. They have performed at churches, evangelistic meetings, conventions, fairs, amusement parks, sporting events, jails, nursing homes, and even on cruise ships. They

they try a male quartet for fun, they began planning this musical endeavor. According to the quartet's family members, they were terrible at first. Following some personnel changes, things got better. Inspired by the Gaither Vocal Band, they began singing Southern Gospel music. This



From left: Maurice, Bill, Tom, and Dick make up 4 the Lord.



are also regularly attendees at the National Quartet Convention, where they won 3rd place in the quartet competition in 2008. Now, they are looking forward to the release of their new CD, expected to debut next summer.

Maurice Anderson (a.k.a. Moe) sings tenor for the group. One surprising thing about Moe is that he was very shy in the early days and had a hard time getting up on stage. He's such a ham now that this fact is truly hard to believe. He has a school-aged daughter, who loves to come to see her Dad sing whenever she has the opportunity.

Bill (a.k.a. Mr. Bill) is the quartet's lead singer. In high school, Bill had a job making pretzels, and in college, he twisted brooms. Today, he is the wit of the group. He enjoys spending time with his wife Julie and two daughters, Holly and Amanda. His girls are involved in many high school activities, and his wife helps the group by selecting photos for publicizing the group. Julie also advises the group on wardrobe choices. According to Martha, Dick's wife, the guys need help in this department!

Dick (a.k.a. Ice Man) serves as the baritone for the group. One of Dick's three jobs in high school was managing a foundry in San Diego. Now, he'd rather be outdoors riding a tractor, driving a motorcycle, or operating heavy equipment than doing most anything else, except sing, of course! He has a wife named Martha and teen daughter named Mara. Both of these special ladies in his life attend 4 The Lord concerts whenever possible and they help with the product table. Martha was also the photographer for the last two album covers, and she co-wrote the title song for their last CD titled "Journey On."

In addition to singing bass and writing songs for the group, Tom (a.k.a. Tom; Martha says there is no ex-

They believe that Christians can and should be the happiest people in this world and they hope to share that joy."

planation for this "nickname") is Dick's younger brother. Tom has a musical theater background and sang in the California Boys' Choir when he was young. Tom has an adult son and daughter. He is very

close to them, and enjoys spending time with them when their schedules allow.

4 The Lord Quartet strives to be the best they can be. They give their all to the Lord, leaving nothing held back. According to Bill, the group has no big game plan. "They consider that up to God, who has led them thus far," says Bill. "If God wants them to sing to small groups of people, that's what they want to do. If God wants them to reach larger audiences with His message of hope and encouragement, then they will be happy to serve in that way. They feel they are on a journey that God is in charge of leading."

In support of her husband and the other men in the group, Martha added, "I have to say that these guys are really fun, they believe what they sing, and they really want to uplift believers and share hope with people who may have lost or never known the amazing hope and peace that God has for every one of His children. They believe that Christians can and should be the happiest people in this world and they hope to share that joy."

It is certain that God smiles when He sees willing vessels like the members of 4 The Lord Quartet. They are leaving their future in God's hands. Whether they end up sailing the seven seas on another Gospel Music cruise, or hear their latest single on the radio as they drive down the road, or are honored to sing at a little country church, they know that they will be traveling down the path God has laid out for them. And they can rest assured that everything they do, whether big or small, is done for the Lord. 🇺🇸

www.4TheLordQuartet.net

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You CAN Stay *Fit* During Christmas

By Laurette Willis

“I am the bread of life” John 6:48

Those words really put holiday overindulgence into perspective don't they? Perhaps the overindulgence we could enter into this Christmas is filling up on the “bread of life” instead of the bread of this world—after all, Jesus was placed in a manger (a feeding trough!) as a baby.

When we think of the bread of this world, do you think of physical bread? It can be that as well as what I call the “soul junk food” of this world. I'm referring to the PG-13, R-rated (and worse) so-called “entertainment” of this world (TV, movies, music, etc.).

Okay, now I'm meddling, right? It's just that I've found that if I'm filling up on the world's junk food through my eyes and ears, I also seem to want to satisfy my mouth with the world's processed junk foods for my body.

When I'm taking in less life through the Word into my spirit, my discernment and choices in other areas of my life aren't as clear or focused.

Pick a “Scripture Snack” Each Day

Fill up on real soul food! Pick one “Scripture snack” to chew on each day. Today my “snack” from the Word was the verse at the beginning of this article where Jesus said, “I am the bread of life.”

Throughout the day I went back to that Word and asked the Lord to give me new revelation on it. I noticed my focus became clearer, I made better choices in a number of areas and I felt satisfied on the inside (not “stuffed” and numb from overindulging my flesh as I had so many times before).

More Practical Tips

In addition to ensuring your heart and mind are full of the Word, here are 5 tips to help you spearhead the movement in your family to a healthier Christmas and 2010:

1. Make a difference in someone's life. Focus on one or two people you are going to get to know better over the holiday. This can be a member of your own family, a friend, a neighbor, perhaps even someone at church who needs to be with a family at Christmas (why not yours?).



2. If you don't move, you lose. Much of the weight gain during the holidays is due to a lack of physical exercise. Decide to get some exercise in early in the day before the hubbub of activity starts.

3. Make it a family affair. After the big meal, be the instigator behind a “Let's all go outside and walk off some of that delicious dinner before dessert!” I think you'd be surprised how many will thank you for it later!

4. Don't skip meals. Even if you think you may be eating more over the holidays, don't make the mistake of skipping meals so you can “stock up” later.

5. Drink plenty of water. Stay well-hydrated. It will also ensure you eat less. We often reach for a high-calorie snack when our body is really crying out for water.

Above all, stay focused on making sure your spirit is well-fed. You will sail through the holidays and into 2010 with your heart full, your mind clear and your body full of energy as a fit witness for Christ. He is able to do “exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us” (Eph. 4:20).

Let's believe Him for it – and share our victory with others this holiday season. 🇺🇸

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Bev McCann

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to all of my Fans and Friends



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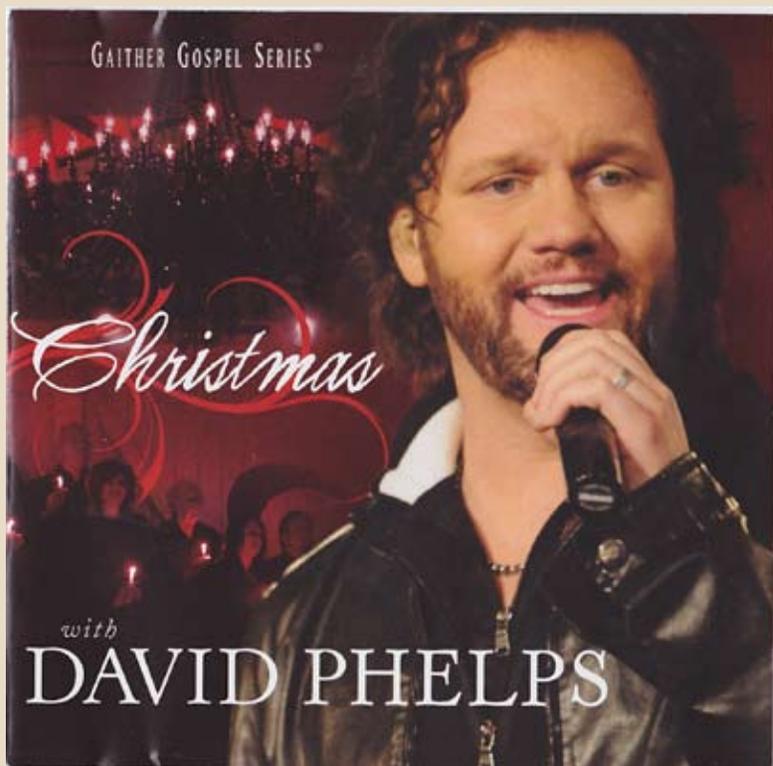


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CHRISTMAS WITH DAVID PHELPS

Produced and Recorded by David Phelps
Gaither Music Group

Without a doubt, David Phelps is one of the most talented gentlemen in any genre of music. While he sings and records with the Gaither Vocal Band, he also performs various solo dates each year and has recorded a number of solo projects. I have a group of Christmas recordings that play from late October through mid January, and a couple of those are David's solo Christmas recordings. To my delight, he has a new Christmas CD/DVD this year and what a wonderful addition it is to my music collection!

David renovated an old barn on his property, and recorded *Christmas with David Phelps* in that setting with a live audience. His song selection is fabulous, combining traditional carols of the holidays with many other Christmas songs that we treasure. The recording begins with a beautiful choir rendition of "Angel Lullaby." This is one of David's own compositions and is an a cappella arrangement. It sets the pace for an exciting musical experience.

One of my favorite songs is "Ave Maria." What a beautiful delivery that captures the very essence of the song. David's arrangements on "O Little Town of Bethlehem," "Joy to the World," and "Jesus, What a Wonderful Child," bring these favorites to life. He then embarks on several secular tunes, giving each

Christian Christmas Music!

CD Reviews by
Sandi Duncan-Clark



his personal touch. These include "Don't Save It All for Christmas Day," "My Favorite Things," "The Christmas Song," "I'll Be Home For Christmas" and "Blue Christmas." David gives Elvis a run for his money on this one!

David wrote two cute songs that capture the hearts of both the young and the young at heart: "Santa Clause Tonight" and "Santa Clause, Get Well Soon." The latter song presents the scenario of the Easter Bunny taking over Santa's duties because Santa broke his leg! What a cute story...and don't worry, the story ends perfectly!

"To Make A King," another song David wrote and one of my very favorites, along with "Joy, Joy" and "Let The Glory Come Down" round out a great hour of Christmas-listening pleasure. If you're not in the Christmas spirit after this, I would be totally surprised! I highly recommend that you add *Christmas with David Phelps* to your library of holiday music.

THE ISAACS CHRISTMAS

Produced by Ben Isaacs
Gaither Music

When it comes close, smooth family harmony,

there is none better than the Isaacs. Their bluegrass instruments and arrangements lend a

unique flavor to many of our all-time favorites



Christmas CDs, cont'd

on their new Christmas recording, *The Isaacs Christmas*. I'm an Isaacs fan, so I definitely was excited to get this new project.

From "Winter Wonderland" to "Away in a Manger," through all 14 songs, I was thrilled with the vocal arrangements and the variety of music offered. Fans helped with the selection of five of the songs through the Isaacs web site and on the Gaither music web site.

While the true meaning of Christmas is remembered with "What Child Is This," "Away in A Manger," "Silent Night" and "Oh Holy Night," the Isaacs lighten the mood with a song Sonya wrote titled "Santa Claus is Real," a tune with a jazzy arrangement. The children add tremendously to this cute song.

"It's Christmas Time Again" is another light-hearted



tune with lots of mandolin and banjo, written by Sonya, Becky and Sonya's husband, Jimmy Yeary.

A medley of "God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen" and "We Three Kings" have a unique rhythm. This medley will have you tapping your toes and easily singing along.

I have two favorite songs on this recording. "Labor Of Love," written by Andrew Peterson, is such an awesome song about the birth of Christ, about Mary's labor, and Joseph's prayer for her and the baby. What a blessing this is...the tears came. And Mark Lowry and Buddy Greene's "Mary, Did You Know" is always an inspiration.

These songs tell the real story of Christmas.

This is another CD I have added to the collection I have in my car. During the holidays, I prefer to travel with the best Christmas music recorded by Christian artists! 🇺🇸

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I cannot believe almost a year has passed since I began my journey as the newest addition to Karen Peck and New River. I have gotten to experience so many sights, adventures, emotions, and dreams that have come true. We returned from our trip out west, and we have been energized and focused on the new year that is quickly approaching.

The most exciting adventure this past month for me is being a part of the recording process. We are currently recording a new album, and as you are reading this article, I am more than likely in the studio recording these fantastic songs. Wow! There is so much more to recording than just picking a few songs, singing, and pressing record. Okay, maybe I'm not that naïve, but it has been shocking. I've never heard such beautiful songs, and it was extremely hard to narrow down to only a few. We laid the tracks with some of the best musicians in Nashville, and to just be in the same room and hear them playing the new songs was amazing! I think the neatest part of the entire process is seeing how these songs, inspired by God, are

brought to life right there in front of me. I can only imagine how they will touch lives. The songs on the new album have been such an inspiration to me over the last few months, and I cannot wait for everyone to hear what God has given these talented song writers.

Another exciting time is approaching, and that is my favorite time of the year, Christmas. I cannot believe it is already here again.

Time really begins to fly when you reach twenty-seven years old. There is just something about

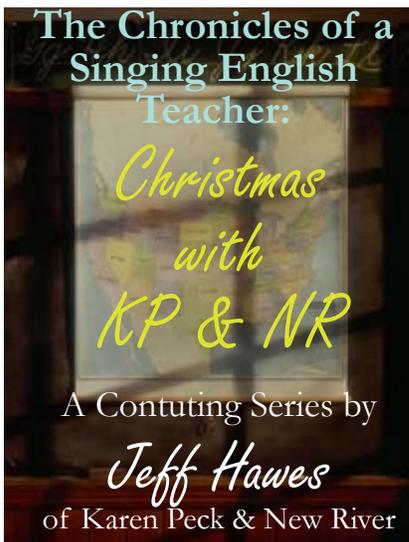
this time of year that brings out the inner child. I can remember as a young boy, I would play in the living room and construct/act out my own Christmas musical. The only Christmas (cassette) I had was a tape of Johnny Mathis. I cherished this Christmas tape for years.

I always had such a wild and vivid imagination when I was younger, and I'm so glad that the Lord put the desire for the love of music in my heart at an early age. I would play the Christmas music and then act out the scenes in our small living room. I imagined I had cattle and sheep grazing by the manger, angels descending from roof, and Baby Jesus, right there by our Christmas tree. As you can see, it did not take much to entertain this boy from Flat Rock, Alabama.

Of course, nothing could compare to going caroling with the church and seeing the looks on the faces of the elderly when they realized we had taken just a few minutes out of our busy schedules to sing with them. I remember how much those carols used to excite me. However, did I really understand their meaning? Did I really understand that our world needed a savior, that I needed a savior? Wow! Above all the decorations, snow, carols, and gifts, I needed a savior, and He came for me.... and YOU! As I grow older, these carols like "Away in a Manger" and "O Come All Ye Faithful" become so true and evident of the love of Christ. What a sacrifice He made so that I could be free in every way possible. It is hard to think that God of the universe sent his only Son to be born in a world that would later crucify Him, but He sent Him for you and me. He loves us and wants us to accept His free gift of salvation. May God bless you and your family this Christmas, and may God reveal to you as He did to me, what Christmas is truly all about. 🇺🇸



The group pictured at Christmas Special taping at In Touch Ministries in Atlanta, Georgia.



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