

Challenge

THE GOOD NEWS PAPER
December 2005
PRAYER LETTER OF CHALLENGE LITERATURE FELLOWSHIP (AUST.) INC.

I remember attending a friends Christmas present opening gathering when all the kids clamoured to get their presents. I watched with interest as the kids vigorously ripped off the wrapping paper and gave a momentary exclamation of delight as they acknowledged what they had received. Very quickly these kids were scanning around looking for their next gift to open. Eventually the frenetic ritual came to an end as the last presents were opened and the adult audience went off for some quiet relief to recover from what had been an intense time to say the least.

A number of things came home to me about this occasion. First of all I was appalled at the amount of indulgence that went on because relatives had literally piled gifts on these children who were in a frenzy because of the sheer number of gifts being lavished on them.

The end result of this was that the children showed little or no appreciation of what they had received. I watched these kids rip open a parcel and give it a brief look of appreciation and then toss it aside in anticipation of another gift to rip open. Their lack of appreciation could not have been more clearly illustrated to me when some time after the gift opening had finished, here were the kids playing with the boxes of the presents they had received. It seemed ironic that the kids were getting more fun out of the boxes than their contents.

When we look a bit closer at this situation these children pictured what has happened for many folks at Christmas. Instead of seeing the real reason for the season they have become consumed with gifts of all sorts rather than the gift of the baby Jesus who came to rescue mankind from the consequence of our sin.

The reason that we give a gift is to express our love to family and friends, and as Christians to acknowledge the giving of the gift of the baby Jesus, but often gifts we give is done out of a sense of guilt or because it is expected. Jesus came as an expression of His love for us and to save from our sins. Matthew 1:21 says this; **“And she will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus for it is He who will save His people from their sins.”**

The problem with Christmas today is that the gift giving has become an end in itself rather than celebrating the coming of the greatest gift of all-Jesus. Some of the advertising that I am seeing on television is just horrendous because it is missing the whole reason for the season. Christmas has now become some sort of means to help the shops increase their sales for the year. Tragically many folks get sucked into the trap of buying gifts they cannot afford and often out of a sense of guilt.

What is even more tragic is the fact that many people and families are purchasing gifts that plunges them into debt. Last Christmas credit card debt reached record levels in Australia after the dust of Christmas shopping had settled. Many live with this debt until Christmas roles around once more. What is even more tragic is that this happens because we have lost sight of the true reason for the season-Jesus.

Like those kids we metaphorically end up playing with boxes the gifts have come in rather than treasuring the gift itself. We get caught up with the incidentals rather than celebrating the most incredible thing that could be given to a man or woman to a teenager or child. The word ‘save’ in Matthew 1:21 means to be whole spiritually emotionally and physically. Now let me ask you; what better gift could you receive this Christmas then to be made whole in this way?

The other thing that came to me as I saw those kids ripping open their gifts was that a wrong precedent for our kids was being set in terms of the amount of gifts and the reason for the giving of those gifts. Living in the materialistic mad world we do the last thing we need for our kids is to validate such materialism by overdoing the gift giving at Christmas. I think if we underline to our children why we have Christmas and what gift giving signifies I believe we are doing them an immeasurable service for their future growth and development as Christians.

On behalf of the Challenge team I would like to wish all of our faithful Challenge users, prayers and givers a wonderful Christmas and fantastic new year for 2006.

— Carl Carmody, Editor of Challenge

Praise

1. We are rejoicing in the Lord's blessing on the papers going into Southern Africa and Kenya. They are about to receive their second order of papers in Kenya and we look forward to hearing how God is going to use this next print run.

2. We have seen some commitments come in recent days from around Australia and Papua New Guinea for which we are so thankful. We yearn to be overwhelmed we responses.

3. Praise God for the extra orders for the paper that have come in for our Christmas edition of Challenge. We are so excited about this edition of Challenge and look forward to how God is going to use it in reaching into people's lives over this Christmas period.

4. We have once again received some wonderfully encouraging gifts to the work of Challenge for which we are so thankful to God. These gifts are so incredibly precious and we praise God for those folk who give to this work so generously and sacrificially.

5. A number of opportunities have come up for promotion of our work in the US next year. Praise God for these opportunities as the potential for prayerful and practical support is excellent.

Prayer

1. Pray for the Christmas edition of the paper as it gets used in all sorts of ways such as in Carol Services.

2. Continue to pray for the ongoing arrangements for the production of our first language edition of the paper in Argentina in Spanish. Pray for Will Herndon from Word Of Life in Argentina as he helps us to set up all the necessary infra structure to get the paper printed and effectively distributed as well as doing the follow up that is so important for new Christians.

3. Pray for Carl Carmody as he heads back to Africa. He will be visiting Kenya Malawi, Botswana and South Africa. Pray for travelling mercies, safety and for good health, and for God's blessing in ministry.

4. Pray for the possibility of getting the funding for a 10,000 print run for Malawi from a trust fund here in Australia. Our Kenyan print is funded through the work of Partners International for which we are hugely grateful.

5. Continue to pray for our wonderful partner in South Africa Multi Ministries and for the incredibly strategic ministry that they do throughout Southern Africa. Also remember to pray for our NZ partner; Challenge Weekly and Editor Garth George and his hard working staff.



*Send your testimony to **Challenge** – Your conversion to Jesus Christ is a miracle, and is a wonderful means of witnessing to a lost world – Ring or write or email to Challenge for a testimony outline sheet.*

Challenge Literature Fellowship

PO Box 978, Cloverdale 6985
Phone (08) 9453 3311 Fax (08) 9453 3006
Email: challenge@cif.org.au