



Merry Christmas
From the Staff at Streets Ministries



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Defend the cause of the weak and fatherless; maintain the rights of the poor and the oppressed. Rescue the weak and the needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked.

Psalms 82:3-4

Lessons From a Special Hand

Birthday balloons are tied to the bed post, colorfully packaged gifts and a cake are on the table. The family is all here. I walk over and hold her hand on this, her 90th year on earth. The hand is weak and the smile much fainter than it was just two weeks ago. She struggles to open cards while the family pitches in to help her open gifts. And while she loves all the presents, she seems to get the most joy from her Memphis Tiger blanket and a picture of her four grandkids. Mom's life has become a struggle since breaking a hip in late July. It is a series of struggles that seem to bring new challenges and disappointments each day. The adage of "one step forward two steps back" is applicable.



Along with my sister, Lynn, and wife, Debbie, I have spent countless hours over the last few months sitting at mom's bedside holding her hand. Mom has always been supportive of Lynn and myself. Whether it was a sporting event, a school play, or a church program, mom has always been there. When I started Streets in 1987, it was no different. I remember mom calling and telling me what she would be able to do for the ministry. She said she could give us \$35 a month. Truth be known, that was probably more than she could actually afford. But she has been faithful. While sitting by her bed one night, I began to think about what that gift has translated to over the years. The obvious is that it is over \$8,400. But then I began to scratch around on a piece of paper and determine what that really means. Two years of middle or high school programming, three semesters of elementary programming, a complete College Tours program with charter bus upgrade, a year of gas in our three vans, ten middle school students to camp, or even a nicely equipped Recreation Room with video games, pool table, ping pong, and more. It was humbling to think about.

"He also saw a poor widow put in two very small copper coins." Luke 21:2

Obviously, the story of the widow's offering is about giving out of our poverty when it does not make sense to the world. However, the widow knew it was not about her pride, but the Kingdom. She understood that faithfulness could be interpreted as foolishness by those in attendance. Still, perhaps as she moved toward the Temple treasury that day, there was a little doubt in her mind. Is that not how we are wired? And what about those loaves and fishes? Was not there a grumbling in the crowd as the disciples retrieved only five loaves and two fish? How many people on the hillside that day shook their heads as Jesus broke those loaves? I do not pretend to know the number, but I do know that in the end "all ate and were satisfied."

If there is one thing that my ninety year old mom understands, it is how God works. My mom knows that even today, God takes the faithful little and turns it into a feast for thousands. How about us? Are we waiting to give something big, or are we waiting until we have what we determine to be enough? Perhaps it is fear. Are we afraid that if we ask what to give that we might be called to do more? This season is a great time to sit down and make a plan to start somewhere. Maybe it is five dollars a month to a local church, or an hour a week to mentor a kid. In the end, you will be amazed at what God does and where it leads. As a result, and maybe for the first time in our lives, we will be transformed into those faithful enough to trust God for provision.

I do not know how much longer I will be blessed to sit by a bedside at night and rub the hand of a saint that understands God still feeds thousands from a crumb and builds ministry buildings from two insignificant coins, but I am grateful for the time that I do have. May God bless you during this very special season!

"Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect." 1 Peter 3:15

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The Importance of Consistency

By Delvin Lane

Twas a week before Christmas and all through the house, everyone was hungry, even the mouse...and to top it all off, as if that wasn't enough, the funds in the bank account had all but dried up.

Unfortunately, this is an adaptation of a carol that most of America seems to be singing this year. The economy is failing, jobs have evaporated, and the country is neck deep in debt. With all of this happening so fast, there is clearly no reason for anyone to celebrate this year...right? Instead of sitting by a cozy fire, putting up lights, and reading Christmas stories to our kids, we have slipped into a state of discontent. The reasons behind this sort of depression is not a looming recession or the pending change in political power, it is simply that we as Christians have lost focus on the things that truly matter in the eyes of the Lord.

Recently, and as a result of my own tendencies, I encouraged the staff at Streets to slow down from the hectic busyness of programming and life, and take part in this the season of celebrating Jesus Christ's birth. Romans 12:2 says that "we should not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of our minds. It is then we will be able to test and approve what God's will is - his good, pleasing, and perfect will." In the midst of the difficult economic times, and our own tendency to become discontent, God's will is calling us to focus on



Cleaborn Homes residents unite in the form of a stuffed animal memorial after a child is shot this past summer.



John leads a group of Vance Middle School boys in prayer after a Bible Study session.

that which is "good, pleasing, and perfect." That is why this Christmas I am inviting you to consider these things in the following areas: Prayer, Service, and Giving.

Prayer

It's the most wonderful time of the year, with the kids jingle-belling and everyone telling you'll be of good cheer; it's the most wonderful time of the year.

These are words often sung as we enjoy this great holiday season. The spirit of Christmas floats in the air everywhere you go. If you have been defeated by the constant pressures of the recent state of the economy, take time to listen to some soothing Christmas music and consider it pure joy. James 1:2-8 proclaims, "My brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials, be encouraged and know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Then let that perseverance finish its work in you so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. If any of you lack wisdom, pray that God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, that it will be given to you." When you pray, pray expecting change. The Lord is waiting to hear from you. He knows your needs and is waiting to take care of them. Be wise in remembering the importance of constant prayer.

continued >>

The Importance of Consistency, cont.

Service

Come, they told me, pa rum pum pum pum; a newborn King to see, pa rum pum pum pum.

The little drummer boy was a poor kid who was unable to afford to bring any expensive gifts to King Jesus. He did, however, offer up his service. "Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many," we should seek to be servants in all that we do. - Matthew 20:28

As we seek to minister to a lost city, we must not forget that often times, service is more valuable than money. Ken's article has set the pace for us. We all have loved ones that are sick. Some of us have friends and relatives that are incarcerated. A visit from you could mean the world to them. Serving at homeless shelters, visiting the elderly, and singing to orphans are all great ways to get involved. Remember these words - "You must serve faithfully and wholeheartedly in the fear of the Lord!" - 1 Chronicles 19:9 Let us be wise in remembering the importance of faithful and wholehearted service.

Giving

People making lists, buying special gifts, taking time to be kind to one and all. It's that time of year when good friends are near, and you wish you could give more.



Members of IPC give of their time and resources to assemble over 500 Christmas Baskets for Streets each year.



While only asked to serve an hour a week, Pathways mentors mean so much more to their students.

More is not always better like the big SUV commercials tend to make us think. According to 2 Corinthians 9:7, "Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give. That gift should not be given reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver". Giving what you can is the key. If you have been a thousand dollar donor in the past and cannot afford to give but one hundred dollars to the places you have been giving to, I encourage you to give that one hundred dollars proudly as if you are placing it in the Lord's hand personally. He loves the heart of the giver, not the amount of the gift. Or, if money is tight, why not simply give the gift of love? Even the person who has everything would be happy to receive the gift of love on Christmas Day, as there is no greater gift than love. So let us also be wise in remembering the importance of cheerful giving.

Prayer, Service, and Giving. Let us all pray together for wisdom in these things and work over the next few weeks on exercising our faith in Him in order to make life better not only for ourselves, but everyone with whom we come into contact with. Merry Christmas to all!

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What We've Been Up To

- In the September issue of National Geographic's Explorer magazine, an article featuring Georgia Avenue's river rafting trip with the **International Paper Corporation** and the **Wolf River Conservancy** was printed.
- In an attempt to honor their good effort, Crystal hosted a "Popcorn Movie" party for Georgia Avenue Elementary students who did not get all E's on their report card, but were genuinely struggling to do the right things.
- September 28th, **Christ the King's** youth group provided snacks for an enthusiastic Elementary "Club".
- September 30th, Andreana and Carmen participated in **Grace Evangelical Church's** annual "Taste of Grace" dinner where they were able to sample from a variety of foods all prepared by the congregation.
- Also on September 30th, Victor Marks of **All Things Possible Ministries** put on a spectacular martial arts demonstration for students in the Streets Center Gymnasium. Victor, a former U. S. Marine and current holder of a 6th Degree Keichu-Do karate black belt, kicked and chopped his way through a variety of mesmerizing drills all while presenting a Gospel message to the over 100 students in attendance.
- On November 10th, Delvin was awarded the 2008 Humanitarian Award. The event, which featured nationally syndicated columnist **Cal Thomas** as its keynote speaker, was co-organized by the Global Children's Educational Foundation and the Main Street Journal. Other recipients of the annual award included Dr. Scott Morris, Founder of the Church Health Center, and Dick Bott of 640 AM and the Bott Radio Network.
- On the morning of November 13th, a group of twenty high school students from **Evangelical Christian School** took a day away from their studies to give the Streets Center a deep cleaning as part of a city wide day of service.



Tanzania focuses on her Elementary Explosion VBS craft.



Sisters Tanzia and Tanzania enjoying their VBS lesson time.

- On November 11th, Taurean, a long time Streets kid and Pathways student, was able to share the stage with the likes of former **Vice President Al Gore, B.B. King, and Diane Nash** as a recipient of the 2008 Keeper of the Dream Award. The award, which was in recognition of Taurean's service in the community and volunteer work at Streets, came with a medallion and commemorative leather jacket.
- December 9th, the **Valero Energy Corporation** presented Streets with the 2008 Blues City Charity Golf Classic Grant Award. As a part of the presentation, Valero hosted a breakfast for close to sixty supporters in Streets' Recreation Room and took a tour of the facility while learning about our approach to ministry.



What's Coming Up

- On December 20th, **Independent Presbyterian Church** will assemble and distribute 575 Christmas Baskets for Streets. Each basket, which will be loaded with over forty pounds of food and cooking supplies, will then make a trip to the Streets Center where volunteers will be paired with a student who will serve as a guide and help volunteers deliver the baskets into the community. The annual event will be an engaging time for all involved, and a tremendous ministry to the community we serve.
- January 3rd, Crystal and Taurean will be hosting a "Mid-Day Lock-In" for Elementary Students in the neighborhood. The event, which is the first of its kind, will run from 12:00 to 6:00 and will feature Olympic style competition, video game competitions, and a movie.
- As a part of their continued effort to invest in the Memphis community, the **Memphis Grizzlies Charitable Foundation** has selected Streets as one of its community partners for the upcoming year. In addition to the support of Streets programming, the foundation has placed an emphasis on mentorship opportunities and will be providing game tickets to Pathways students and their tutors as a reward for their efforts.
- Beginning January 31st, Crystal will be hosting the first in a series of Elementary Explosion VBS's. The Explosions, which range between 25 and 50 students each, are in need of medium sized volunteer groups to help run them. If you are interested, please contact Whitney for details.



Elementary students enjoy Bible Story Time during a recent Elementary Explosion VBS.



Students enjoying a VBS lesson during Second Presbyterian Church's CityServe 2008 mission emphasis weekend.

- From December 27th through January 2nd, Carmen will be taking five Booker T. Washington High School girls on **Independent Presbyterian Church's** 19th Annual "Total Disregard for Your Body" Ski Trip in Winter Park, Colorado. Pray for their safety!
- This basketball season, the **Crichton College Comets** will once again be playing all of their home games in the Streets Center gymnasium as they continue their quest for an NAIA title. After last years Elite Eight finish, the atmosphere should once again be lively as students from the Foote and Cleaborn Homes community will be allowed to attend each game free of charge. For a complete schedule of games and times, please visit www.crichton.edu/athletics.
- With the programming set to begin next semester at the new Highland Heights sight, plenty of volunteer opportunities are currently available in our **Pathways** mentorship program as well as for middle and high school **Bible Study** groups. And with attendance swelling to over 1,500 students a week at the Vance site, there is also a need for **Ready Readers**, **Room Adopters**, and **Street Smarts** volunteers. If you are interested, please contact Whitney at (901) 525-7380 or whitney@streetsministries.org.