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THE TRUE CHRISTMAS

This door opens from the
inside

CHRISTMAS ANGELS

All you need is love

A CHRISTMAS PROMISE

Hope takes an unexpected
form

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Personally speaking

As I was selecting material for this Christmas issue, I came across the following story by an unknown author. It conveys a wonderful truth: God often deputizes people to help answer prayers.



Late December is cold in New York City, but this day was exceptionally so. A boy about ten years old stood in front of a shoe store on Broadway, barefoot, peering through the window and shivering with cold.

"What are you looking at so intently?" asked a woman who hadn't taken her eyes off of him since she had first noticed him when she was still half a block away.

"I was asking God to give me a pair of shoes," the boy replied.

The lady led the boy into the store, and first asked the clerk for half a dozen pairs of socks the boy's size, then for a basin of warm water, some soap, and a towel.

The clerk had never had such a request, but he soon found everything the woman had asked for.

She found a spot in the rear of the store, knelt down, and washed and dried the boy's feet. By this time, the clerk had returned with the socks.

When the boy had pulled on a pair, she bought him a pair of shoes. Then she helped the clerk put the other socks in a bag, paid for the socks and shoes, handed the bag to the boy, and gave him a smile and a pat on the head. "You will stay warmer now" was all she said.

As the woman turned to go, the astonished boy caught her by the hand, looked into her face, and with tears in his eyes asked, "Are you God's wife?"



May you and yours share such joys with others this Christmas season.

Keith Phillips
Keith Phillips
For the *Activated* Family

giving

The guide to giving



BY LINDA SALAZAR

“MOMMY, I THINK YOU LIKE THOSE TOYS MORE THAN WE DO,” I remember saying to my mom as we shopped at a discount store. The way she would inspect each toy, carefully read through each book, count puzzle pieces, and put together toy sets (discount items tend to miss pieces), I was sure she loved those toys every bit as much as we kids did. She was always on the lookout for sales so she and my hard-working father could put presents under the Christmas tree for us kids.

But my parents’ giving wasn’t limited to things. Sometimes their gifts were “hands on,” like when they took us to a park to play a favorite game together, or trekked by our sides through the woods, or took us to visit some historical site.

Looking back I can clearly see that my parents didn’t love the toys and all the rest as much as I thought they did—they just loved *giving*. They were *always* giving. Whether it was their time and attention, help with our schoolwork or projects, or lending a listening ear, they never ceased to give from their hearts.

As Christmas approaches, I can’t help but think back and marvel at those simple, love-filled gifts. They still stand out to me, many years later. Their giving helped set my standards of what Christ-

mas is all about. The Christmas presents themselves I hardly remember, but Mom and Dad’s enthusiastic love for giving I will never forget!

Of course, gift giving is a timeless tradition and a wonderful way of showing love. And gifts are always especially thrilling for children. Perhaps that is what our heavenly Father had in mind long ago on that first Christmas, when He gave us His love in the fashion He knew we would understand best. He gave us the most precious and enduring gift ever given in such a simple, humble way—His love and Spirit in the form of a gentle baby. Jesus was and still is God’s great Christmas gift to us all.

Modern marketers have found so many holidays to celebrate with gift giving, and they come around so fast that it’s sometimes hard to remember which one we’re shopping for or why. But stop for a moment, won’t you, and recall the most memorable gifts you have ever received and why you still hold them dear. Were they the things you could see and hold, or the love those gifts were wrapped in?

This Christmas and always, may our heavenly Father’s example be your guide to giving. 🎄

LINDA SALAZAR IS A FULL-TIME VOLUNTEER WITH THE FAMILY IN THE USA.

Stop for a moment, and recall the most memorable gifts you have ever received and why you still hold them dear.

The true Christmas

THE TRUE CHRISTMAS

BY VIRGINIA BRANDT BERG

SOME PEOPLE CANNOT UNDERSTAND how God could have come down and been wrapped in human flesh, but He came. That isn't strange to me. In fact, it is quite easy for me to believe because I see Jesus born in human hearts every day. He comes and lives in hearts and transforms lives, and to me that's a great miracle—that He can be born in your heart and my heart and live there in our hearts, identifying Himself with us that way.

God's Word says that Jesus shall be called "wonderful." "Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His

shoulder. And His name will be called wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, everlasting Father, Prince of Peace" (Isaiah 9:6).

Wonderful His name because He was wonderful in His life, going about everywhere doing good and healing all that were oppressed (Acts 10:38). Wonderful His death because He died for you and me, that we might have eternal life (1 Peter 2:24; 1 John 4:9). Wonderful His resurrection because He rose from the dead, that we may also be resurrected (1 Corinthians 15:20–21). And wonderful now in

His life after death because He lives to intercede for us (Hebrews 7:25).

But it is not enough that Christ, the King of kings, was born in Bethlehem beneath the star that heralded His coming; He must be born within your heart before He finds His throne. Won't you let Him come into your heart?

Perhaps you've seen the famous painting by William Holman Hunt in which Jesus is seen standing before a



Christmas

closed door, with a lantern in hand. Some time after Hunt had finished what was to become his most famous work, someone came to him and told him that he'd made a mistake: There was no doorknob. "I didn't make a mistake," Hunt answered. "The door must be opened from the inside. The doorknob is on the inside."

Jesus, the Savior, can never enter a door unless it is opened from the inside. God's Word says, "As many as *received* Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God" (John 1:12). Receive Him this Christmas! He will transform your life. Welcome Him into your heart!



If you haven't yet received God's most wonderful gift, Jesus, you can right now by praying the following prayer:

Thank You, Jesus, for coming to earth and living like one of us, for suffering all the things that we go through so that I could know my heavenly Father's love. Thank You for dying for me, so I can be reconciled with Him and have eternal life in Heaven. I receive You as my Savior now. Please forgive me for all the wrongs I've ever committed, and help me to get to know and love You in a deep and personal way. Amen. 📌

CHRISTMAS PRAISES

As you and your loved ones gather this Christmas, you may want to take the opportunity to thank the Lord for all He gave us when He came to earth as a baby so long ago.

Here are some short prayers of thanksgiving that can be read privately or in a group, taking turns.

May God bless you with a praise-filled Christmas!

Christmas!—How special this time is! Thank You, Jesus, for giving us this special occasion to love and enjoy You and each other.

It was the song of angels that led the shepherds to Your side. So may we, by the sounds of Christmas, be led to fall on our knees in praiseful worship of You.

The wonder of Your love, the treasure of Your Spirit, the warmth of Your touch, the joy of Your presence, salvation, happiness, purpose, peace of mind, and so much more—thank You for freely giving us so many gifts!

Happy birthday, Jesus! We love and praise You for all You have done for us, and for being our special friend.

You are the sweetest One we know. Help us to love You not only on Christmas Day, but every day throughout the year.

Thank You for leaving Heaven to bring a bit of Heaven down to us.

You are more beautiful than any Christmas tree, more wonderful than any present, more exciting than any Christmas party! You give meaning to our lives.

Just look what You started, Jesus, by saying yes to Your Father when He asked You to come here for our sakes! Help me to always say yes to You in return.

With You in our hearts, Christmas takes on a new and wonderful meaning. Help us to give Your love to others so they can enjoy Christmas like we do.

Thank You for Christmas. Thank You for giving us this special day to enjoy You and each other. Thank You for living and dying for us. Thank You for the unending gift of life that we can share with others.

A CHRISTMAS PROMISE

BY TERRI MOORE



LEFT: PROMISE
UPPER RIGHT:
BILL AND TERRI
LOWER RIGHT:
PROMISE

SHE CAME TO US IN THE FALL OF 1976, not long before Christmas. It was wonderful to have a baby girl! We already had a little boy, Michael, who at one and a half was the joy of our hearts. But now, a little girl too! It seemed like things couldn't get any better. The Lord was truly blessing our lives!

My husband Bill and I are Christian volunteers with The Family. Shortly before our daughter was born we had set out on our first overseas mission. We had moved from our native U.S. to the eastern coast of Australia, to the small city of Newcastle. Things were about to become very difficult for us. Perhaps the Lord was testing our level of commitment to His service. Perhaps He wanted to draw us closer to Him. Perhaps He wanted to teach us about His miraculous ways. Perhaps all three.

Our small flock of believers was a motley crew, including a middle-aged poet, a drag queen who was drawn to

the message of Jesus, and a 16-year-old girl named Dale, who became one of our dearest helpers and closest friends.

Dale had come to us one night, desperate and in tears. She was pregnant. Her father was demanding that she have an abortion, and had thrown her out of the house. We took her in, and while she was with us Dale came to know Jesus and His love for her. She decided to keep her baby, and soon her father had a change of heart and accepted her back home.

Then our daughter was born. We thanked God for how good He had been to us to bless us with such a beautiful family.

Several months earlier, the Lord had told us, "Through this baby you are going to learn how real My promises are!" We were to give her that name—Promise. Little did we know how dramatically or how quickly the Lord would keep His word.

The other missionaries we had been living, working, and sharing expenses with had to leave unexpectedly, and it soon became clear that we couldn't continue on our own. We would need to close our fledgling missionary work. As we faced this large task alone, sickness struck. Michael came down with such a high fever that he was constantly on the verge of seizures. Then Promise and I became ill. I was too weak to lift a hand to help Bill with the children or anything else that needed to get done.

Eventually Michael and I began to recover, but Promise got worse. We took her to the hospital for a checkup, but after an examination and hearing

about what Michael and I had been through, the doctor concluded that Promise had simply caught the flu that was going around and was going to be fine.

We took her home, but her illness worsened. A couple of nights later a red rash appeared on her neck and moved slowly down her back as her fever rose to 103° F (39.5° C). Our six-week-old baby was in excruciating pain. Something was very, very wrong! We rushed her back to the hospital.

The doctor on duty in the ER took one look at Promise and summoned two other doctors for their opinions. Through the medical screen that separated us from the doctors, Bill and I made out one terrifying word: meningitis.

The first doctor appeared from behind the screen and callously ordered us to admit Promise to the hospital immediately. We asked him to explain the diagnosis, but he refused. We were young and inexperienced, yes, but we weren't prepared for the harsh treatment we received from that particular doctor.

"Admit this baby right now," he ordered, "or she'll be dead in the morning!"

"Dead in the morning!" The words rang in my ears. My body went limp as I released my baby into the doctor's arms and she was whisked away.

Bill and I waited outside on the hospital steps for the test results, staring at each other in shock and disbelief. Our six-week-old Promise's life hung in the balance.

As we held hands and cried out to the Lord together for His merciful intervention, His words came back to us: He would use her to teach us how real His promises are. We claimed every Bible verse we had memorized about divine healing, and begged the Lord to keep each promise.

We went home and anxiously

awaited news from the hospital. Over the phone another doctor told us that Promise had all the symptoms of bacterial meningitis, and that a spinal tap had confirmed it. There are two types of meningitis, and the type that Promise had was incurable. The doctors had ordered further tests, including a second spinal tap. Devastated and heartbroken, we could only await the results with prayer.

An hour later the doctors said the results from the second round of tests were "confusing and possibly contradictory." Suddenly we felt a small ray of hope: Perhaps the Lord was already starting to heal her.

Because the last tests had been inconclusive, baby Promise needed a third extremely painful spinal tap. We prayed all the more desperately for a miracle.

Back at the hospital, the doctors told us they were positive she had bacterial meningitis, but the test results kept coming back "vague, cloudy, and distorted." They couldn't explain it, but we could. The minute we had prayed, God had begun a miracle of healing inside her little body. He was fulfilling His promise to us. He was teaching us how real His promises are.

For the next three weeks I stayed in the hospital with Promise, who was kept in an incubator and fed intravenously. There I read *The Hem of His Garment*, a short autobiographical book by Virginia Brandt Berg, one of America's first woman evangelists, who had experienced a miraculous healing herself that led to a healing ministry to others. I clung to every word, every promise.

Meanwhile, Bill was busy at home caring for our son and packing our belongings. Because we were closing our missionary outpost, we had given

"Dead in the morning!" The words rang in my ears. My body went limp as I released my baby into the doctor's arms and she was whisked away.

Christmas Angels

BY DAVID BRANDT BERG

FOR THE CHRISTIAN, EVERY DAY CAN BE CHRISTMAS! Jesus showers His love down on us every day of the year. But sad to say, it's not that way for so many poor folks who haven't yet found the real meaning of Christmas.

So many people are lost, lonely, downtrodden, weak, and weary. Some are weak in their bodies, others are weak in their minds, and yet others are weak in body, mind, and spirit.

There are those who are trampled on: the poor, the persecuted, the hungry, victims of war and crime and exploitation; those nobody wants or cares about, those who have so little in the way of worldly goods, those

who lack even the basic necessities.

There are those who wear a smile, yet ache inside.

Then there are others who do have material goods and who appear to "have

it together" in the eyes of others, but who are lost and lonely prisoners of their own selfish desires. They are weary and heavy laden with problems, stress, fears, and phobias.

There are those who wear a smile, yet ache inside; those who are



engulfed in a sea of emptiness; those who suffer from pain, guilt, bitterness, and condemnation; those who feel remorse over the past or fear the future.—So many lost and desperate folks in the world today!

It reminds me of the words to that old Beatles song, "All the lonely people, where do they all come from?" Well, I'll tell you where they come from—all the lonely people come from selfish living.

All the lonely people, the lost and the forlorn, come from a society where people look to their own needs and not to the needs of others. That's where all the lonely people come from—from a dog-eat-dog society, from a lot of wrongful living. They're products of the Devil's own doctrines of "do your own thing" and "to each his own." That's where all the lonely people come from. All those lonely



people are the product of a world that has forgotten its Creator. They're victims, the sad result of what happens when people's lives aren't ruled by love.

Deepening darkness

It's getting darker and colder all the time, and many people can feel it. They may not understand it, and they don't always want to admit it, but it's happening. The sun is setting, the darkness is falling, and the world is looking for hope, for some ray of light.

Event after event has left the nations questioning. "Why this and why that? Why all the pain and strife in the world? Why the slaughter of the innocents? Why troubles and sorrows?" These questions are being raised in people's hearts and minds, and those whose foundations have

been built on the sand, or others who had no foundations to begin with, have no answers. Never has the world been hungrier for true love and real answers than now!

It's reminiscent of that famous Christmas carol "O Holy Night": "O holy night, the stars are brightly shining! It is the night of our dear Savior's birth. Long lay the world in sin and [sorrow] pining ..."

There's never been a time in all of history when the world has been in such sin and sorrow as it is now. There's so much talk about the "advancement" and "betterment" of mankind—advanced medicine, modern technology, new inventions, better governments to

Never has the world been hungrier for true love and real answers than now!



make it a better world to live in—so much talk of progress, when in reality things are regressing all the more. Look around! Today people are lying in sin, sorrowful and pining away on the inside. Never before has there been so much confusion, so many voices saying, “This is the way to go,” so many false claims deceiving the people. Never in all of history has the world needed to hear the truth like they do today!

Angels arise!

How does the rest of that song go? “A thrill of hope! The weary soul rejoices, for yonder breaks a new and glorious morn!” Never before has the world needed a ray of hope like they do now! Never before have people so needed to hear about the new and glorious morning that is just around the corner.

The refrain is also very significant: “Fall on your knees! Oh, hear the angels’ voices!” Just like the shepherds heard the angels announce the birth of Christ, the Lord wants the people of the world to hear those angels’ voices today.

And I’ve got news for you: *You* can be one of those angels. You can be one of those Christmas angels sent from Jesus Himself to proclaim the good news to the lost and lonely of the world, to give them the ray of hope they have been waiting for. Who better for Him to use than His own children who have the Words of life, who know His truth, and who He’s made rich in faith!

In this day of hatred and hardness of hearts, of confusion and deception, of scheming and sly words, of false fronts and cover-ups, there is a great need for His love to shine through. As

the darkness falls and the cold winds blow, you must hold up the light. You must hold it up steady and firm for all to see.

If you will shine His light on people, He’ll do all the rest. He’ll cause it to accomplish His purpose in their lives and hearts and minds.

Love in action

Not only does the world need to *hear* the truth today, but never before has the world been in such great need of *seeing* the truth. People not only need to *hear* about true love, they need to *see* it. They need to see love put into action!

It’s just human nature to sometimes be confused by the words you say, but there’s no confusion when they see it put into practice. It’s like that poem by Edgar A. Guest, which says: “I’d rather see a sermon, than to hear one any day. I’d rather one would walk with me than merely tell the way.” For most people to accept the truth, they not only need to *hear* the *sermon*, but they need to *see* the *sample* as well.

Jesus said, “By this shall all men know that you are My disciples, if you have love one toward another” (John 13:35). Why do you think He said that? Wouldn’t it have been enough for you to simply *tell* others about the love of Jesus? Couldn’t the Lord just as well have said, “By this shall all men know that you are My disciples, if you preach My message”? Wouldn’t that have been enough?

Evidently not, because the Lord said that all men would know that you are His if you have *love* one for another. And if you have love one for another, you’re certainly going to show it throughout the day in obvious, tangible ways that others can see.

It's not good enough to just talk about love. Jesus said you have to *have* love, you have to *live* love. The Lord knew that there would be no denying that sample.

What can you give Him?

This Christmas and throughout the coming year, give the Lord the gifts that He's most pleased with—gifts of love! Give your love! Give of yourself! Shine forth the love and sweetness of Jesus through the light of your eyes, a loving look, kind speech, and kind deeds. Be like Jesus for others. Be the living sample of the message, the living proof that it works!

What better way to live Christmas each and every day of the year than to continually give to those around you, to truly live as He taught us, to show His love in all the little ways throughout the day, to show the world living proof that the love of Jesus works!

Back to the carol: "Truly He taught us to love one another; His law is love, and His Gospel is peace!" He's entrusted you, His child, with His law, which is love. Now He's trusting you to follow it, to make it work, and to live in love, that by this all men may know that you are His disciples.

And the next line of the song? "Chains shall He break, for the slave is our brother, and in His name all oppression shall cease." Praise the Lord! Love is powerful!

So if you want to know what to give the Lord this Christmas, what to give the One who has everything, then give your love not only to Him, but reach out and give your love to others. His Gospel is love. Will you live it? Will you give it? You might not feel equal to the task, but *God* is, and He'll help you if you try.

Pray and ask the Lord to help you live Christmas each and every day of the year by helping you to follow His great commandment to love your neighbor as yourself. This is the real meaning of Christmas. This is the reason for it all. This is the reason Jesus came down at Christmas in the first place—so we could have life eternal, yes, but also to teach us to love, so we could turn around and give that life to others.

Give of yourself! Give others your love, your prayers, your time, your attention, your care. Love God by loving your neighbor! Expand your love this Christmas, and together we'll all sing the rest of this carol with our whole hearts, as we proclaim His power and glory!

"Sweet hymns of joy in grateful chorus raise we. Let all within us praise His holy name! Christ is the Lord! Oh, praise His name forever! His power and glory evermore proclaim! His power and glory evermore proclaim!"

Will you praise His name forever? Will you go out and proclaim His power and glory forevermore? How can you do that? The best way you can tell of His power and glory is by showing love to others, by giving love!

Your life will tell it all, because you'll be the living proof. As you live in His love, it will bring down His power upon you. And as He pours out His power upon you, His power and glory will be made known to all the world forevermore—the power of love! "Christ is the Lord! Oh, praise His name forever! His power and glory evermore proclaim!"

Let others see Jesus in you! That's what Christmas is all about! Merry Christmas! 🎄

*Give others
your love,
your prayers,
your time,
your attention,
your care.
Love God
by loving
your neighbor!*

The day I saw JESUS



HOME WAS A STONE AND MUD-BRICK HOUSE on a hill overlooking Bethlehem. We were a shepherd family, and I was the youngest of five brothers. We were poor, life was hard, and Roman taxes didn't make it any easier. But despite the hardships, we never lost faith in the one true God or His promise of a coming Messiah.

One day tragedy struck. A fire broke out in our house. I was only seven at the time, and since my father and brothers were out in the fields with the sheep, the fire spread faster than my mother could put it out. As I tried to run outside, a blazing door fell on me. My mother pulled me out, but my face was badly burned and I couldn't see. In time the burns healed, but I remained blind.

I felt hopeless and useless. I sat for hours, staring into the darkness and asking God why He had let this happen to me.

My mother tried to encourage me by finding little things that I could do, and sometimes my brothers took me to the fields with them. Somehow I felt closer to God out there, like He was the shepherd and I was one of His sheep, having to be led everywhere.

Five years after my accident, the most wonderful thing happened. We were at my favorite spot when the sun began to set. My brothers described it to me—every color and cloud, the exquisite whirling and swirling that sent iridescent streaks across the sky.

Then it was over. Night covered the earth as the darkness covered me. After the sheep were settled for the night but before we had gone to sleep, suddenly a light shone all around us—a light so bright that even I could sense it.

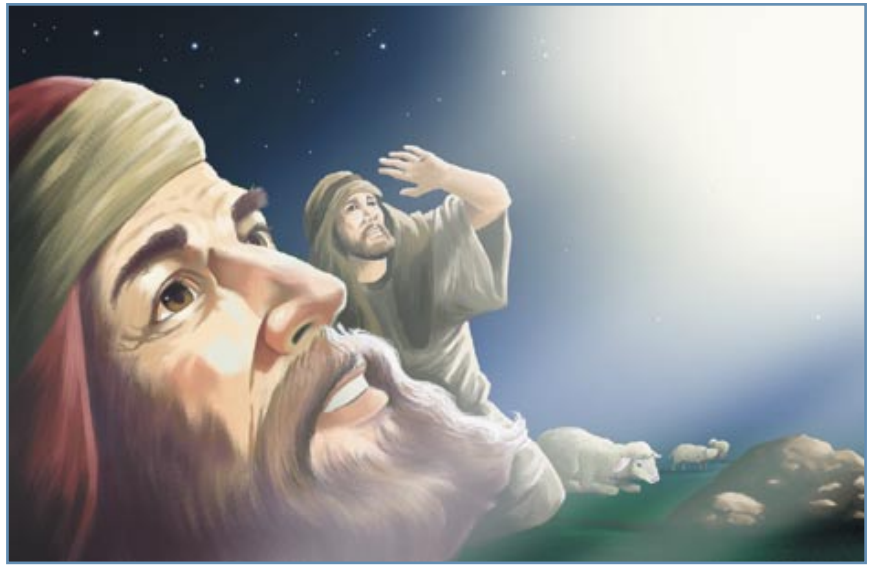
“What is it?” I cried.

“We don’t know,” my brothers answered. I could tell by the tone of their voices that they were frightened.

Then there came a beautiful voice—a voice that seemed to emanate peace. “Fear not, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people.” Only angels could speak like that! “For unto you is born in the city of David the Savior, which is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: You shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger.”

Then everyone gasped as a sudden burst of light even brighter than the first filled the night sky, and we heard a multitude of the heavenly host praising God. “Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth to men of good will!” It was magnificent! The glory and power of God was in their voices! Then, as suddenly as they had come, they were gone.

It was several minutes before anyone uttered a word. My father



broke the silence. “Our Savior is born, and our God has seen fit to declare to us the good news! Come! Let us go to Bethlehem to see the babe the angels told us of!”

Amos said he would stay with the sheep. It was his watch anyway.

“Can he stay with you?” father asked. I knew they were talking about me.

The sound of their footsteps faded as father and the others rounded the first bend down the path. Amos and I moved closer to the campfire.

“Tell me again about the angels, Amos.” My mind was racing. Our people had waited so many years for the coming of the Messiah. How I wished I could have gone with them, but what use would that have been? I lamented that I would never see the Savior.

When I awoke the next morning, the sun had warmed my face but the same sadness filled my heart. Then I heard excited voices coming up the path—shouts of praise. Someone called out my name.

“Did you see Him? Did you see the Savior?”

“What is it?” I cried. “We don’t know,” my brothers answered. I could tell by the tone of their voices that they were frightened.

A wonderful feeling came over my entire body as Jesus placed His hands over my eyes.

“Yes!” they all called out in unison.

“We found Him just as the angel said we would,” my father said. “It was just a stable, no better than ours, but it was filled with the most wonderful presence. Surely it was the Spirit of the living God. We were overwhelmed with joy and awe, and fell to our knees and worshiped Him.”

“His name is Jesus,” my oldest brother said, “and it was just as Father said. I’ve never felt like this before!” Although I could not see my brother’s happy face, I could tell by the tone of his voice that he was changed.

As we started toward home, that name kept repeating in my mind. *Jesus. Jesus. Jesus.*

Years passed, but I never forgot that night or that name.

Father died when I was 20. All of my brothers married and two of them moved away in search of better work. The other two still tended our sheep. I helped my mother with the garden.

Many more years passed before exciting news came from Galilee. A new prophet was teaching about the

kingdom of God. Multitudes followed Him—and His name was Jesus. Could it be the *same* Jesus—the one the angels had told us of 30 years earlier? I wanted so badly for it to be Him, and I wanted so badly to be *with* Him!

Some months later, one day when I was in Bethlehem with my mother, I heard shouts and the sound of people running past me. A great crowd was gathering at the end of the street.

“What is it?” I called out. “What’s happening?”

“Out of the way, blind man!” Hands that matched that rough voice pushed me to the wall. “The prophet is coming through, Jesus of Nazareth!”

Could it really be Him? “Jesus! Jesus!” My cries were drowned out by all the other commotion. “JESUS! JESUS!” I cried all the louder.

Then suddenly everyone stopped yelling and shoving. What was happening now? “JESUS!” I called once more in desperation.

The next voice came from right in front of me—a voice filled with love and sympathy. “Yes. What do you want Me to do for you?”

“My Lord!” I lifted my head in amazement. “I wish that my eyes were healed, that I might see!”

A wonderful feeling came over my entire body as Jesus placed His hands over my eyes and prayed to His Father in Heaven. “Let them be healed.”

Even before I opened my eyes, I knew I was healed. A beautiful feeling of peace and love overwhelmed me. All the sadness, all hopelessness, all the fears of all those years were washed away in that instant. I fell to my knees before Him and looked up—up into the loving face of my Lord and Savior. 📌

JOHN ROYS IS A FULL-TIME VOLUNTEER WITH THE FAMILY IN INDONESIA.



notice on our rented house and needed to move as soon as Promise and I could leave the hospital. Christmas was approaching, and I hadn't even had time to think about it. I hadn't even been home for three weeks. Our troubles had pushed aside the usual joys of Christmas, but God was about to give us the sweetest Christmas present we could have asked for.

On Christmas Eve our miracle came. God's promise to us was complete. Promise was released from the hospital. It was official: She was healed! Our hearts overflowed with thankfulness and joy!

Even while we rejoiced over this wonderful news, our situation was still quite desperate. Bill had phoned a friend in Sydney who said he could take us in. Bill would pick us up at the hospital and we would need to go straight to the train station—the four of us and all of our belongings. We wished we didn't have to travel with Promise still in delicate condition, but we had no choice. We were solely at the mercy of God.

When Bill arrived for us, he only had some of our things—as much as he could bring by himself—but told me not to worry.

We arrived at the station just as our train pulled in, and there, walking down the platform was our dear friend, Dale—tiny Dale hauling with her the rest of our belongings! I will never forget that sight. She was our Christmas angel!

I hugged my little boy all the way to Sydney, while Promise slept peacefully. As Bill and I looked into each others' eyes, we knew exactly what the other was thinking: We had just witnessed a miracle.

And it wasn't over yet. As we arrived in Sydney that Christmas Eve, one of our dear brothers in Christ was waiting to receive us with open arms. Yes, we felt the love of Jesus that Christ-

mas. We had been like Joseph and Mary on that night long ago, with no home for our little family, but this dear man made a place for us, as the innkeeper had for Joseph and Mary.

Michael and Promise and our other children are now grown, but I will never forget that Christmas when our little family was held up by the hands of God, protected by His love, and touched by His angels—some of which were actually ordinary people who the Lord used as instruments of His love. That Christmas and every Christmas since, my prayer has been that I may be there for others, as others were there for us. God promises are real! ▲

TERRI MOORE IS A FULL-TIME VOLUNTEER WITH THE FAMILY IN THE USA.

As Bill and I looked into each others' eyes, we knew exactly what the other was thinking: We had just witnessed a miracle.

CHRISTMAS IS...

BY IAN BACH

A mother's love for her baby boy
 A sacrifice to bring others joy
 A father's care for one not his own
 A message sent from a royal throne
 A seeming wrong that was turned to right
 An angel's song in the dark of night
 A prophet's vision at last fulfilled
 A miracle because God had willed
 A gift of love from a caring heart
 A bringing together of what was apart
 A reaching out to comprehend
 How another felt by a sincere friend
 A seeking soul that journeyed far
 To find a dream, to follow a star
 A bridegroom claiming a bride as his
 All these things are what Christmas is.

IAN BACH IS A FULL-TIME VOLUNTEER WITH THE FAMILY IN THE MIDEAST.

Let My love warm your Christmas.

No matter how down you may be, if you are out of work and have an empty wallet or bank account, if you're lonely or sick or have suffered personal loss, if war or hate or injustice or others' indifference have chilled your heart this Christmas, My love can change that. Let My birth and all that it heralded be remembered today. Let My love fill you and give you purpose.

Evils also plagued the world at the time of My birth and throughout My life on earth. Remember the miserable circumstances into which I was born. Think of the mothers who mourned the slaughter of their baby boys by a power-crazed king. Remember the oppression of that time.

In the midst of such great darkness came the brightest light the world has ever known; amidst great suffering the greatest gift was given. My Father sent Me in the form of a weak and helpless baby to grow up and live as one of you and experience the same hurts you do, and to suffer at the hands of unjust men. I became one of you in order to save you.

Let the truth and love that I brought that first Christmas Day shine in your heart now. Let Me wipe away your fears and tears. Let My love warm your Christmas.