

## Isn't There Anyone Who Knows What Christmas Is All About?

*“Sure, Charlie Brown. I can tell you what Christmas is all about...”*

One of the best movie set up lines in history is delivered at a poignant moment by a 7-year-old in a cartoon who then tells a 9-year-old what Christmas is all about. That line is delivered by Linus, after Charlie Brown becomes frustrated by all sorts of things and asks if anyone knows what Christmas is all about. We all have our favorite Christmas movies for various reasons, but that moment in **“A Charlie Brown Christmas”** is perhaps the most powerful moment of any Christmas movie in history.

Charlie Brown spends the entire movie trying to *find happiness* during the Christmas season. He begins by confiding in Linus, only to be put down as being the **“Charlie Browniest”** of all the Charlie Brown’s in the world. He then asks Lucy and gets a nickel’s worth of advice, but then she only gives him responsibility of being a director. He is disappointed that his dog, Snoopy, has entered into a contest of having the best decorations in the neighborhood. Then, he gets aggravated at all the kids as he tries to direct the play, when their only interest is dancing! He then puts his hopes that a tiny Christmas tree will help him find the true meaning of Christmas, but he practically kills the tree.

And so, by the end of the movie, Charlie Brown is struck with the realization that he really doesn’t know what Christmas is all about. This movie first aired 50 years ago, and during those five decades, many people have struggled with the same issues as Charlie Brown and still don’t know what Christmas is all about.

*Every Christmas its the same....we decorate a tree, put lights outside, attend Christmas parties, go to Christmas musicals at school or at church, send cards, buy gifts, and even seek out advice to cope with it all. But by the time the season is over, and the New Year rolls around, we have missed the meaning yet again.*

Trust me, *I love Christmas* just like so many do, and the songs and the events and the decorations help me *“get into the Christmas spirit”* but there’s just too much busyness! Schedules are too full and our attention gets put on all the things we need to do and places we need to be. Those things aren’t bad...but they don’t often help keep our focus on what Christmas is all about.

There is only one real reason that the season of Christmas is celebrated. There is only one real purpose for this time of year being so special. There is only one real need for us to celebrate Christmas at all. So, in response to Charlie Brown’s question, *Linus answered it best. He quoted Luke 2, and said...*

*“And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.’*

**That’s what Christmas is all about, Charlie Brown.”**

Jesus Christ, God’s only Son, was born in a manger and the reason He was born was so that He could die for my sins and for your sins. That night He was born, hope of eternal life for the world was born. And **God’s greatest gift** was given to us in the promise of His Son’s life, death and resurrection. Presents, music, parties and decorations are all nice, and help get us in the Christmas spirit. **But Christmas is all about the birth of Jesus, and peace being brought to earth!**

Taken from Pastor Randy Johnson’s Dec. 8th, 2015 blog.

### Churches:

- Argenta
- Arthur
- Atwood
- Boody
- Calvary
- Emmanuel
- Fellowship
- Findlay
- Forsyth
- Galilee
- Hammond
- Heyworth
- Lincoln
- Lovington
- Mt. Zion
- Shiloh
- Sullivan
- Summit Avenue
- Tabernacle
- Tri-Valley

### Mission Statement

*Central Baptist Association exists to foster relationships among churches in order to assist them in fulfilling the Great Commission.*

*The Vision of CBA is to see churches collaborating together to build the Kingdom of God.*

### In This Issue:

Front Page-*Isn't There Anyone Who Knows...*

Page 2-*Prayer Pointers, Bringing Christ to Soldiers*

Page 3-*CBA Christmas Party, Birthdays & Anniversaries, Disaster Relief in Tennessee*

Back page-*News from the Pews, Focus Funnies, Calendar*

# Prayer Pointers

## *Praying with balance.*

*From Thomas E. Miller*

How do people learn to pray? Most of us might agree that we've learned by observations, instruction, and participation. Sounds good. Yet most of us would have to admit to more prayer failures than we'd like to confess. All of us are naturally and basically selfish. So when we hear James 4:3, "You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions." (ESV). Sounds like James is saying our spiritual poverty and powerlessness in prayer is due to wrong motives. It is not necessarily the thing for which we are asking that is wrong, but rather the reason we ask for it. So maybe most of us are still in the learning stages when it comes to our prayer life.

Thom Rainer says, "Many churches, perhaps most churches in America, focus their corporate prayers on physical needs—sickness, bereavement, and hospitalizations. While these prayer needs are valid and need fervent intercession, the eternal needs of those without a relationship to Jesus Christ are critical."

Ken Hemphill is more direct when he says, "The truth is we spend more time praying to keep dying saints who are prepared to die out of heaven than we do to keep sinners out

of hell." Unfortunately, many of our church "prayer meetings" seem to focus on everything but prayer, or at best, are completely out of balance in terms of the amount of time and energy spent praying for physical health compared to spiritual health. It is time for balance.

Henry Blackaby writes, "Most of our churches have not learned how to pray together. The greatest untapped resource that I know of is the united prayer of God's people."

Back to Ken Hemphill, "It is apparent God wants to answer the prayers of His people, and we can be certain that we are praying according to His will when we pray about evangelistic church growth. All church growth originates from the prayer closet. Prayer links our impotence with God's omnipotence. It links our human efforts to participate in church growth with God's sovereign power."

Surely, our God is able and willing to do great and mighty things now as He did for saints in Biblical times. Maybe, it is time for us to read Psalm 81:10 again. Since the new birth is itself a miracle. Surely, God still wants His church to "Attempt great things for God; expect great things from God." (Hudson Taylor)

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**It's not a question of whether people like big churches or small churches. People like *effective* churches. If a large church is effective in reaching people, people come. If a small church is effective in reaching people, people come and bring friends until (often) it's no longer a small church. -Carey Nieuwhof**

## Bringing Christ to Soldiers at Christmas Time

Since 2009, it has been my great honor and privilege to serve as a US Army Chaplain, in the Illinois Army National Guard. Christmas is a special time of year, and it can be especially so for Service Members and their families. For so many, in recent years, it has meant being away from home and family. Most of our National Guardsmen have been deployed at least once, and many have been overseas several times. A Christmas celebration, at home with the family is appreciated all the more by those who have been deployed over the holidays.

Many of our Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Marines have come home hurting. They still bear scars, whether physical, mental, relational, or spiritual. Christmas can be hard for those who have missed a year of family life, or the growth of a child. Many struggle with feelings of guilt for being away, especially at the holiday season. Our mission, as a Chaplain corps, is to restore hope, help service members find meaning, and heal those moral and emotional wounds that so many suffer. Depression, post-traumatic stress, moral injury, and even suicide are all the more common, as these issues are magnified during the Christmas season. As a Christian Chaplain, I seek to communicate to these young warriors that Jesus is the one and only source of lasting hope and healing.

As many struggle to put their experiences in perspective and find meaning in their deployments, their sacrifices, and their time away from home and family, I often remind our Soldiers that they have served a very important purpose and performed a vital service, and they follow in the steps of the greatest Man to ever walk on

earth. I remind them that Jesus Christ once left the comforts and glory of His Father's Heaven, to come into a desolate foreign world, to suffer, and bleed, and die. He did this, not for any personal gain. He already shared the glory of God with His Father from the foundation of the world (John 17: 24). He had nothing to gain by coming into this world to fight the battle for our freedom and deliverance from sin, death, and hell. He did it so that we could enjoy the same glory, and the same relationship with the Father, that He already rightly possessed and enjoyed. Knowing that they have served in such noble and honorable service not only helps the service members to find meaning and peace in their experiences, but also has helped many to realize the great price paid for their souls, and understand the obligation incumbent upon us, in light of such love.

So this Christmas, pray for our service members. Those who have served, and those who currently serve in harm's way, who won't be home for Christmas this year. Honor Christ, as you honor them, and thank them for their sacrificial service. You are free from Hell, as a child of God, because of the precious blood of Jesus. You are free as an American, because of the blood of many faceless, nameless Service members, who shed their blood on foreign beaches, deserts, and shores. Pray for them, and their families who have shared the sacrifice, who have watched their loved one go off to war. They did it for you.

Merry Christmas!

*By Dr. Scott Andrews*

# Disaster Relief Sent in After Wild Fires in Gatlinburg, TN

by David Roach, posted [Tuesday, November 29, 2016](#)

GATLINBURG, Tenn. (BP) -- Wildfires in and around the east Tennessee resort area of Gatlinburg have destroyed the facilities of at least one Southern Baptist church, claimed buildings at two other churches and prompted local believers to launch relief ministries.

The reported 14 blazes near Gatlinburg Nov. 29, 2016 were among a series of wildfires across the southeast this fall that have led Southern Baptist Disaster Relief units to deploy in Tennessee, North Carolina and Georgia.

In Gatlinburg, about 100 homes have been damaged or destroyed and 14,000 people have been evacuated, the Knoxville (Tenn.) News Sentinel reported, noting a 16-story hotel was among the buildings on fire.

Though media accounts Nov. 29 cited no known fatalities, pastor Dan Spencer of First Baptist Church in Sevierville, Tenn., just north of Gatlinburg, told Baptist Press he anticipates "a sizeable number of fatalities" to be reported in the days ahead.

"As a pastor, I'm heartbroken for people in our community and our church," Spencer said. Yet "at the same time ... I'm so proud of first responders and linemen and volunteers, people just calling and saying, 'I want to help.'"

Among the worst hit churches was Roaring Fork Baptist Church in Gatlinburg, where both the worship center and family life center were a "total loss," Pastor Kim McCroskey told BP.

First Baptist Church in Gatlinburg "lost our youth building and the custodian's residence," but "the main sanctuary is OK," youth minister Bryon Fortner told BP via text. "Many of our church members lost homes. It's really bad."

Gatlinburg's Banner Baptist Church also suffered loss from the fire. The congregation's fellowship hall "burned to the ground," Pastor Pete Lamon told BP, and the main building suffered smoke damage. Some church members lost their homes.

At First Baptist Sevierville, Southern Baptist Disaster Relief workers and local volunteers prepared some 1,500 meals Tuesday morning for distribution by the Red Cross, Tennessee Baptist Convention disaster relief specialist Wes Jones told BP. Meal preparation was expected to continue.

The approximately 20 DR workers who have been deployed in Tennessee also are working on damage assessment, providing chaplaincy services at shelters and running errands for local emergency management workers, Jones said.

The Sevier County Association is collecting bottled water, blankets and food for donation to fire victims.

Please pray for the Disaster Relief Teams, the churches, and everyone affected by these fires.



## ANNUAL CBA CHRISTMAS PARTY

FOR PASTORS, STAFF, AND SPOUSES

(This includes secretaries)

**Friday, December 16th, 2016**

**At Emmanuel Bapt. in Decatur**

**6:30-8:30 PM**

We'll have a nice meal, sing some Christmas carols, and have lots of fun.  
*Dr. Lanny Faulkner will be bringing the devotion.*

**No charge for adults.**

\*Childcare provided for \$5 per child to cover the pizza & sitter.



### Menu:

Mixed greens salad

Angel wings chicken breasts

Angel hair pasta salad w/veggies

Garlic bread & Green beans

Angel food cake

with mixed berry sauce

Angel cookies



**R.S.V.P.**

**by Dec. 7th, 2016**

**to Chris at**

CbadeCATUROffice

@yahoo.com

or call 330-7593,

\*include # of children who need childcare.

## Equip-videos for developing leaders

More than 100 free videos are available at [IBSA.E-Quip.net](#). Some of the videos are: *The Preaching Ministry in the New Marriage Age-Jeff Iorg*; *How to Connect Every Person in Your Church-Steve Gladen*; *Vocal Warm-ups-Emily Martin*; *Developing Effective Bible Teachers (Pts. 1 & 2)*; *Planning a Dynamic Meeting-Bill Donahue*. **Check one out!**

**CBA Pastors, Staff & families...**

**December**



### Birthdays

**8-Glenn Baker (Hammond/Lovington)**

**15-Pauline Miller (Tabernacle)-retired**

**21-Mike Rutledge**

**24-Noah Smith (Mt. Zion)**



### Wedding Ann.

**17-Randy & Leigh Johnson (Tab)**



# from the Pews!

**Calvary**-is having their Christmas musical, "O' Holy Night" on Dec. 18th at 6 PM at Calvary Baptist Church. Two baptisms are planned in the near future.

**Emmanuel**-held their Thanksgiving Fellowship on Nov. 27th and then "Decked the Hall" for Christmas. Come and join them for Christmas Eve service on Dec. 24th at 6 PM.

**Galilee**-recently installed a new Church Sign on the outside of their Church. They welcomed a new family as GBC Members and had a wonderful Child Dedication service, with two families dedicating their children unto the Lord. Galilee recently did a door-to-door campaign, which went very well.

**Lincoln**-Bro. Dale Granda has been doing an excellent job as Interim Pastor. Thank you Bro. Dale. They had a wonderful turn-out for the Thanksgiving Supper on November 16th. The turkey was cooked to perfection by Mrs. Nola Turley and everyone showed their expertise with their favorite potluck

recipe. Friends and families gathered to share time and reminisce over the past year. Church Christmas Program is planned for December 18th at 6 PM and a Christmas Supper on December 21. Merry Christmas to all of you from Lincoln Southern Baptist Church.

([www.lincolnsouthernbaptist.com](http://www.lincolnsouthernbaptist.com)- Check out the new website.) Please pray for them as they seek a Pastor.

**Summit Ave.**-is having *State of Grace* in concert this Sunday morning, Dec. 4th, followed by their Annual Holiday Potluck.

This year their Christmas program, "A New Star" is being presented by the Puppet Ministry youth and directed by Becky Hand. The play will be presented at Summit Ave. on Dec. 18th at the 10:30 AM service.

**Tabernacle**-Women's Ministry is hosting their annual "Celebrate Christmas" Banquet on December 2nd. This is a way for them to invite their unchurched friends who might not attend a worship service.

Don't miss the 2nd year of "A Charlie Brown Christmas." Bring your friends, invite others to attend this free

family-friendly performance for the Christmas season, Dec. 9-11, at 7 PM nightly, and a 2 PM matinee on the 10th.

Their annual Christmas Eve Candlelight Service is at 6 PM on the 24th. The service is open to everyone. Tabernacle would like to wish everyone a Blessed Christmas and a very Happy New Year!



## EVERYONE!

The CBA office will be open  
Dec. 27th-29th & Jan. 3rd-5th.

## HAPPY NEW YEAR!

The Next Pastor's Gathering Lunch will be **January 19th—11:30-12:30**

More information to come next month.



**HEADS UP!** "Meet the Nations" Missions Event on Jan. 29th, 2017 at Tabernacle Baptist Church from 5-7 PM.

## Mark Your Calendar

### December 2016

4th-11th-Week of Prayer for Lottie Moon Christmas Offering  
16th-6:30 PM-CBA Pastors, Staff, Wives Christmas Dinner  
24th-Christmas Eve

**Sunday, 25th-MERRY CHRISTMAS**

NOTE: CBA Office open December 27th-29th; Jan. 3rd-5th

### January 2017 *Call to Prayer Month*

Sunday, 1st-HAPPY NEW YEAR

**16th-MARTIN LUTHER KING DAY**

19th (11:30-12:30) Pastor's Gathering Lunch at Emmanuel FH

**22nd-Sanctity of Life Sunday**

23rd-at 6 PM-Church Relations Team Mtg. at CBA office

24th-25th-Illinois Leadership Summit at IBSA Bldg.

29th-CBA Missions Celebration *Meet the Nations* at Tabernacle

## FOCUS FUNNIES



"...and just so you know, I had a very good day today, so I'd like more of the same tomorrow."