

December 24, 2017

Merry
CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY
New Year

Hello and holiday greetings from Growth Ministries!

We want to take this time to say how much we value you as a reader of our monthly newsletter. We hope it continues to inspire you, generate hope and give you good cheer.

This is our last issue of 2017. We will be working on a new look for the newsletter in 2018. We hope we continue to hear from you. We want to know your prayer requests, any spiritual reading material you may need, your progress as you grow in Christ, your challenges and your testimonies. We at Growth Ministries believe that God has connected you to us on purpose.

Please find an extra copy of the newsletter in this envelope. We ask you to share it with someone.

P.S.: Our Executive Director, Lonnie Johnson is a mentor at Lansing Correctional Facility. Due to guidelines around mentoring, he is not allowed to communicate directly with inmates at that facility. If an inmate at Lansing has questions or comments for him, please direct them to our Executive Secretary and she will be sure your requests are given the proper attention.

From the bottom of our hearts we love you with the love of Christ which is unconditional and never ending and it is our desire to see you **grow**.

Sincerely,

Linda Lewis, Director of Communications

Randy Spearman, Director of Activities and Recruitment

Paul Spencer, Volunteer Minister

Terrance Saunders, Volunteer Minister

Cyndi Johnson, Executive Secretary

Lonnie Johnson, Executive Director

THE GIFT

CYNDI JOHNSON, EXECUTIVE SECRETARY, GROWTH MINISTRIES

If we were asked to define the word “gift”, the first thing that would come to mind for most of us would be “something received from someone else with no strings attached”. On Christmas day, we receive gifts from friends and family in all different forms; toys, money, clothes, electronics. The one thing these gifts all have in common is that they are given out of love, with no expectation of receiving anything in return, except maybe a heartfelt “thank you”.



Christmas is a time when many believers associate the tradition of giving gifts with one of the most incredible acts of love by God. It's a time when we celebrate the birth of Jesus, God's greatest gift to mankind. Christmas is not just about baby Jesus being born in a stable, wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger. It's really about a miraculous event when God became a human in the Person of Jesus. So when you think about it, God was really giving us a part of Himself. Through Jesus Christ, not only have we received the gift of salvation, but we have the opportunity for a direct relationship with God.

As we become more mature in our walk, and strive to be more like Him, we discover a deeper sense of satisfaction when we are able to share our gifts with others. It's a simple statement but so true - "It's better to give than to receive!" Think about your gifts. What has God placed in you that He wants you to share with others? Gifts are not always tangible things that have a physical presence or things that can be touched. Sometimes the intangibles have a far greater impact on the lives of others than anything we could buy off the shelf; a smile, an encouraging word, compassion, patience, unselfishness, humility. These are some of the attributes of Jesus Christ. If God has placed them in you, they should be shared freely and often, without expecting anything in return.

As a child, I can remember hearing some of the old folks say “Every day is Christmas at my house”. They were referring to the fact that their children received everything they needed, and most everything they wanted on a regular basis. They didn't have to wait until December 25th to be a blessing to their family. Can you say every day is Christmas in your house? Are you blessing others on a daily basis? If you're not, then today is a good day to start. Smile at that person who walks by you each day with a frown on his face. Encourage someone who lacks self-confidence. Tell them you believe in them, and God is able! Lend a compassionate ear when someone wants to vent their frustrations, even if you know you can't do anything to change their situation. Have patience and don't write off that one person who has issues when you know they're trying to do better. Don't be selfish with others. When you find something good, share it. Be humble and never too proud to admit when you're wrong, to apologize, and to thank the person that cared enough about you to correct you. Each of these attributes is a gift from God so share your gifts!

“FROM THE YARD” (EACH MONTH WE WILL BRING YOU CONTENT FROM ONE OF YOUR BROTHERS WITHIN THE WALLS)

“The Hunt” BY TODD DEAL – LANSING CORRECTIONAL FACILITY

Have you ever thought about what the words “seeking whom he may devour” mean? Many have heard this phrase of well-known scripture but it always struck me as odd. The problem with it (as I realized years after hearing it) is that it denotes “hunting”.

When we read 1 Peter 5:8, it is natural to think of a giant, ferocious, man eating lion. Take a minute and picture the giant teeth, huge claws, and majestic mane. But here in lies the problem...those lions don't “hunt”. Those are male lions. They protect the “pride” and have even been known to run hyenas down over 20 miles to keep territory safe.

However, hunting is done by the females of the “pride”. They don't do it by themselves either, but in packs. If you're unlucky enough to see one stalking you, there could be anywhere from two to ten that you don't see that have already taken position around you.

This is much like the temptation of sin that the enemy injects into our lives. Just like in Ephesians 6:16, the enemy doesn't throw one dart. He throws many darts, looking for a weakness in our armor.

I remember once watching a documentary about tribesmen in Africa. Three of them were watching a pack of lionesses run down a gazelle. As one of them was finally dispatching the creature, one of the men turned to the other two and said, “Remember, don't show any fear and stay by me.”

That's when I witnessed one of the most amazing things in my life. The three tribesmen locked arms and casually walked directly toward a large pack of ferocious, man-eating lions, while they were tearing into their fresh kill.

What was even more amazing was that when the lions noticed them coming toward them, they all scattered like common house cats!

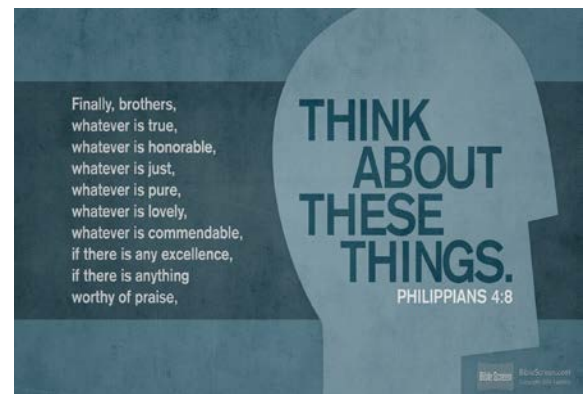
The leader of the three men took out a long blade; cut off a portion of meat, hung it over his shoulder and said, “Let's go before they realize what we've done.” They locked arms and departed just as calmly as they arrived.

Amazed, I remembered 1 Peter 5:8 and knew a solid principle from this example. When we're tempted or even battling sin, we need to lock arms with fellow believers, for support, and approach the issue head on without fear.

It was then that I went back to 1 Peter and read verse 9 as well. “Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world.” What better call to action could be given in the support of a fellow brother? We must lean on one another for support, direction, and personal accountability.

I'll close with this thought; if temptation starts with a thought, and sin is a product of that thought in action, then best way to curb sin is our lives, after prayer and faith in Christ, address our thoughts so that they don't turn into actions.

Philippians 4:8 specifically tells us what to think about! Think about what is true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, commendable, excellent and praise worthy! These can't lead because no fault is found in them. And when we have our minds locked on these things and Christ, the enemy will have choice but to move to other “hunting grounds”.



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“WORDS TO GROW BY”

LINDA LEWIS, GMI DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS

The Reason for the Season

Yes, Christmas-time is coming as it does every year,
 But yet it seems its meaning is not so crystal clear.
 Some think the Christmas season is just for girls and boys
 OR Giving/Getting presents and Santa Claus with toys;
 It seems some have forgotten that Jesus is the One
 that Christmas has been named for...

God's only, precious, Son.

The reason for the season is Jesus Christ our Lord
 Not Santa Claus or presents
 Or gifts we can't afford.

The season has a reason...to thank God, our Redeemer, for His love.
 So let us remember to keep Christ at the center of Christmas
 And that He is not *just* the reason for the season
 But He's the reason for every day of our life. **Luke 2:11**

PEACE ON EARTH AND GOOD WILL TO ALL!

Jesus vs. Santa



1. Santa's gifts don't last (This is why he has to come every year with new toys). Jesus' gifts are forever (The world is still talking about the one gift He gave to us over 2,000 years ago).

2. Santa gives us things that break and get old. Jesus takes what is old and broken and turns it into something eternally glorious.

3. Receiving gifts from Santa is based on how good we are. Jesus gives because of how good he is. Period.

theCreativeBibleMom.com

Upcoming events for Growth Ministries volunteers

1. Growth Ministries will help sponsor and participate in the annual KWANZAA celebration in Lansing's Medium facility on December 30th.
2. Terrance Saunders will be serving communion and delivering a message in the Max Chapel at Lansing on January 7th at 8:30 am.
3. Lonie Johnson will be serving communion and delivering a message in Minimum Chapel at Lansing on January 7th at 9:00 am.
4. Lonnie Johnson will be giving a message in Meduium Unit on January 21st at 7:30 am.

CLOSING WORDS

LONNIE JOHNSON, GMI EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Satan Loves Christmas

Christmas is a Christian holiday that began honoring the birth of Jesus Christ. Christmas evolved over two thousand years into a *worldwide* religious and secular celebration, incorporating many pre-Christian, pagan traditions into the festivities along the way.

Because it has become so secular, I would be willing to bet that Satan enjoys the fact that it has become more about trees, lights, gifts, food and drinks than about the greatest thing God ever did for mankind.

Billions of dollars are spent each year on gifts that go to family, friends, co-workers and even strangers. Many of us often look forward to receiving a gift or two ourselves. But what do we offer Jesus. After all, it is His birthday. Why are we the ones looking for gifts or giving gifts to others? Another distraction from the real reason this day even exists.

There are even those that say Christmas is about spending time with your family. Many songs say that Christmas is about "Good will Toward Men" meaning that men should get along with one another. But I will contend that people can get along and still go to hell.

Christ's birth is a fulfillment of hundreds of years of prophecy saying that God would send a savior. God literally put his own essence in a human body so that there could be a perfect sacrifice to shed blood that would cover our sins once and for all. It was the beginning of God unveiling His perfect love to us in a way that has lasted for over 2,000 years on to eternity. What are you celebrating at Christmas? Don't let Satan distract you from the "real reason" for this moment.

What must I do to be saved?

If you have never accepted Christ as your Lord and Savior, or if you have turned away from Him living a life of unrighteousness, and you wish to be connected to Him and have ever lasting life, then take a moment and say the prayer below:

"Lord, I confess that I am a sinner and ask for your forgiveness. I believe that your son Jesus died on the cross for my sins and was resurrected with all power. I invite Jesus to be the Lord of my life and your Holy Spirit to come into my heart to guide me for the rest of my days. Amen."

Romans 10:9 says 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.*

If this is you, please write Growth Ministries and we will gladly help you start your new life in Christ.

Growth Ministries, Inc., Attn: Executive Secretary, P.O. Box 9045, Kansas City, KS 66112