

# GIFT GIVERS

Agape International Ministries



Feb. / Mar. 1999

## Our God has shown us what it means to give...

For God so loved the world, that **He gave His only begotten Son**, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.

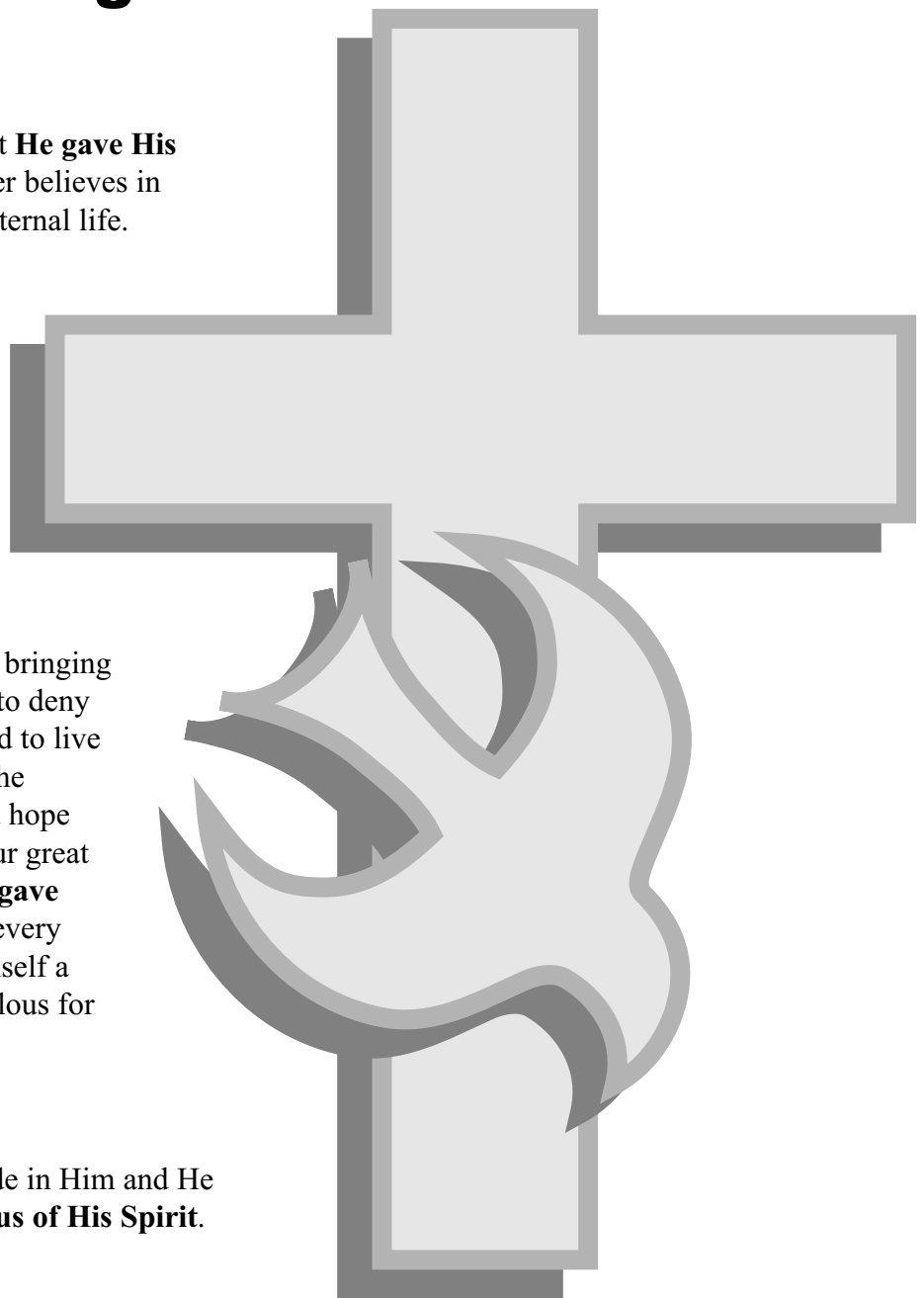
— JOHN 3:16 NASB

And walk in love, just as **Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us**, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma. — EPHESIANS 5:2 NASB

For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, **who gave Himself for us** to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds. — TITUS 2:11-14 NASB

By this we know that we abide in Him and He in us, because **He has given us of His Spirit**.

— I JOHN 4:13 NASB





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Vol. 6, No. 2 Feb. / Mar. 1999

Published by  
Agape International Ministries  
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**Editors' Note: All Scripture references in this publication are from the King James Version of the Bible, unless otherwise noted.**

## “Thank you, Sister...”

As a former teacher, I was deeply touched by the following real-life account by another educator, Sister Helen P. Mrosia. In accordance with her wishes, I'm passing this inspirational story on to you as I believe that it will bless everyone who reads it.

He was in the first third-grade class I taught at Saint Mary's School in Morris, Minnesota. All 34 of my students were dear to me, but Mark Eklund was one in a million. Very neat in appearance, he had that happy-to-be-alive attitude that made even his occasional mischievousness delightful.

Mark talked incessantly. I had to remind him again and again that talking without permission was not acceptable. What impressed me so much, though, was his sincere response every time I had to correct him for misbehaving, “Thank you for correcting me, Sister.” I didn't know what to make of it at first, but before long, I became accustomed to hearing it many times a day.

At the end of the year, I was asked to teach junior-high math. The years flew by, and before I knew it, Mark was in my classroom again. He was more handsome than ever and just as polite. Since he had to listen carefully to my instruction in the “new math,” he did not talk as much in ninth grade as he had done in third.

One Friday, things just didn't feel right. We had worked hard on a new concept all week, and I sensed that the students were frustrated with themselves and were getting edgy with one another. I had to stop this crankiness before it got out of hand, so I asked them to list the names of the other students in the room on two sheets of paper, leaving a space between each name. Then I told them to think of the nicest thing they could say about each of their classmates and write it down. It took the remainder of the class period to finish their assignment, and as the students left the room, each one handed me a paper. Charlie smiled, and Mark said, “Thank you for teaching me, Sister. Have a good weekend.”

That Saturday, I wrote down the name of each student on a separate sheet of paper, and I listed what everyone else had said about that individual. On Monday, I gave each student his or her list. Before long, the entire class was smiling. “Really?” I heard whispered. “I never knew that meant anything to anyone!” “I didn't know others liked me so much.” No one ever mentioned those papers in class again. I never knew if they discussed them after class or with their parents, but it didn't matter. The exercise had accomplished its purpose. The students were happy with themselves and one another again. That group of students moved on.

Several years later, after I returned from vacation, my parents met me at the airport. As we were driving home, Mother asked me the usual questions about the trip, the weather, and my experiences in general. Then came a lull in the conversation. Mother gave Dad that sideways glance that we all know simply means, “Dad?” My father cleared his throat as he usually did before something important. “The Eklunds called last night,” he began.

“Really,” I said. “I haven’t heard from them in years. I wonder how Mark is.”

Dad responded quietly, “Mark was killed in Vietnam. The funeral is tomorrow, and his parents would like it if you could attend.” To this day, I can still point to the exact spot on I-494 where Dad told me about Mark’s death.

I had never seen a serviceman in a military coffin before. Mark looked so handsome, so mature. The church was packed with his friends. Chuck’s sister sang “The Battle Hymn of the Republic.”

Why did it have to rain on the day of the funeral? It was difficult enough at the graveside. The priest said the usual prayers, and the bugler played taps. One by one, those who loved Mark took a last walk by the coffin. As I stood there, one of the soldiers who acted as pallbearer came up to me and asked, “Were you Mark’s math teacher?” I nodded as I continued to stare at the coffin. “Mark talked about you a lot,” he added.

After the funeral, most of Mark’s former classmates headed to Chuck’s farmhouse for lunch. Mark’s mother and father were there, obviously waiting for me. “We want to show you something,” his father said, taking a wallet out of his pocket. “They found this on Mark when he was killed. We thought you might recognize it.” Opening the billfold, he carefully removed two worn pieces of notebook paper that had obviously been taped, folded and refolded many times. I knew without looking that the papers were the ones on which I had listed all good things each of Mark’s classmates had said about him.

“Thank you so much for doing that,” Mark’s mother said. “As you can see, Mark treasured it.”

Mark’s classmates started to gather around us. Charlie smiled rather sheepishly and said, “I still have my list. It’s in the top drawer of my desk at home.”

Chuck’s wife said, “Chuck asked me to put his in our wedding album.”

“I have mine, too,” Marilyn said. “It’s in my diary.”

Then Vicki, another classmate, reached into her pocketbook, took out her wallet and showed her worn and frazzled list to the group. “I carry this with me at all times,” Vicki said, without batting an eyelash. “I think we all saved our lists.” That’s when I finally sat down and cried. I cried for Mark and for all his friends who would never see him again.

– Sister Helen P. Mrosia

P.S.

The purpose of this letter is to encourage all who read it to compliment the people they love and care about. We often tend to forget the importance of showing our affections and love. Sometimes, however, even the smallest things mean the most to another. I am asking you to please share this letter with your family and friends now.

There isn’t much that I could add to Sister Mrosia’s sentiments except to encourage you to abide by them. Please pass this letter on as she asks. You may copy this article in its entirety for that purpose. Better still, why not pass this entire newsletter on to a loved one. It is Bro. Dave’s intention that this free-of-charge newsletter be used in “speading the love of Jesus throughout the world.” If you feel that this publication could be a blessing to others, please give us their names and addresses in writing, and as the Lord provides, we’ll send copies to as many of these people as we can.

– Wade David

## You Don’t Have To Be a Writer!



Do you have an insight or an experience that could inspire and encourage others? We hope you’ll let us bless others by sharing it through **Gift Givers** newsletter. Even if you’re not an accomplished writer, we’d like to hear from you. After all, this is your newsletter. Help us make it valuable; help us make it real. Tell us what God is doing in your neck of the woods!

# Nourish the Tree. Harvest the Fruit. Save Some Seeds.

Fruit is to our bodies what financial support is to missions. Each is fuel that energizes and enables the accomplishment of useful work. Fruit is gathered from trees to relieve hunger; donations are collected by churches to support mission projects. Without a sufficient supply of fuel, the work suffers or even stops. This simple analogy may be helpful in understanding the uniqueness of CAMEM's ministry.

Traditionally, churches and other charitable organizations view the donations they receive as fruit — fuel to be used to sustain the services they provide. Used in this manner, however, everything given to them is consumed almost as soon as it is received. This wasteful practice forces an organization to come back again and again to its supporters — their fruit trees — looking to them for more fuel.

CAMEM is quite different. Donations to the Harvest Fund are planted and nourished, rather than being consumed to meet immediate needs. They are put to work as fruit-bearing trees. In this manner, one-time donations can become perpetual sources of monthly love-gifts — a steady supply of fruit — to be used to enable and sustain a diverse and growing number of mission projects.

To CAMEM supporters, the effect of this non-conventional approach is striking. Their contributions establish an orchard from which God, as He chooses to bless it, can bring forth a bountiful harvest month after month. From this perpetual harvest, CAMEM elects with great joy to share the fruit — monthly love-gifts — with those whose faith and generosity helped to make the fruit possible, so that they may support the mission projects God places on their hearts. By this means, a complete reversal from conventional



practice is accomplished: donors can be favored as perpetual recipients, instead of looking to them relentlessly for more contributions.

In an effort to maximize stewardship over God's orchard, CAMEM also saves some seeds from each harvest. A portion of each month's gains are held back for growth of the Fund. In effect, these "seeds" are planted to expand the orchard and increase its fruit-bearing capacity, so that CAMEM anticipates being able to increase its monthly love-gifts to each recipient continually, until Jesus returns.

Our Lord's favor upon the Harvest Fund is evident. The love-gifts He has made possible for CAMEM to distribute in the first fourteen months of operation have significantly exceeded the published projections. We invite you to become a part of this great work of His hand.

– Glenn Haecker

**CAMEM Harvest Fund gained 20.3% in February!**

**Our Lord, Jesus Christ, is kind to us far beyond what we can think or imagine.**

**FINALLY, BRETHREN,**

**WHATSOEVER THINGS ARE  
WHATSOEVER THINGS ARE  
WHATSOEVER THINGS ARE  
WHATSOEVER THINGS ARE  
WHATSOEVER THINGS ARE  
WHATSOEVER THINGS ARE  
IF THERE BE ANY  
IF THERE BE ANY**

**TRUE,  
HONEST,  
JUST,  
PURE,  
LOVELY,  
OF GOOD REPORT;  
VIRTUE,  
PRAISE,**

***THINK ON THESE THINGS.***

— Philippians 4:8

A nightly ritual for me is to watch the 10:00 p.m. news. My family is so keenly aware of this ritual that they will pause or postpone their TV viewing until “Mama’s watched the news”. It is such a habit that I don’t even consider what I’m filling my mind with for half an hour each evening. Our local news is filled with sensationalism and bias, and there is rarely anything in it that is uplifting or heartwarming. We live in a world filled with negativity, and we usually confront negative, self-centered people several times throughout our day. Many times, even among Christians, we are critical and judgmental. This hinders us from living the joy-filled life that our Father desires for us. He came not only to give us life, but to give us *abundant* life.

I have recently been convicted to practice Philippians 4:8. I can’t say that I do this all the time, but it is my goal. In order for our minds to “think on these things,” we must fill it with wholesome, uplifting thoughts. The Lord has instructed us in Hebrews 10:25 (NIV) to encourage one another “and all the more as you see the Day approaching.” Few things encourage me more than hearing about how mightily the Lord is working in a person’s life.

As a Christian family, we need to be encouraging one another. With this in mind, I am asking that you would consider sharing blessings that the Lord has bestowed on yourself or your family during the last few weeks. If you e-mail them to [aim@aim4jesus.org](mailto:aim@aim4jesus.org) or mail them to us, they will be considered for publication in the newsletter as space permits.

— Nancy Haecker

### ***PRAYER REQUEST***

HE WHO WATCHES THE WIND WILL NOT SOW AND HE WHO LOOKS  
AT THE CLOUDS WILL NOT REAP.

— Ecclesiastes 11:4 (NASB)

Most of us want to wait until every condition is perfect before we act. However, sometimes it takes a step of faith to reap the Lord’s blessing. Dave and Bonnie Austin have taken that step with the AGAPE and CAMEM ministries. Some of you know them personally and know that they have stepped out numerous times. The Lord gave Bro. Dave a vision for these ministries several years ago, and he has been faithful to pursue them. We can be thankful that he is not a wind and cloud watcher.

The Austins stay very busy with the work of the ministry, and we sometimes forget that they have personal lives as well. This has been a very trying month for them with Bonnie being hospitalized, the death of a very dear friend, and some unusual family obligations. They have not complained and have continued to oversee the ministry while tending to their personal needs.

Burn-out is becoming more and more common these days among ministering servants. Let’s join together to pray that Bro. Dave and Bonnie would be renewed in body, mind, and spirit, and that the Lord would pour out His abundant grace in their lives.



# Bonnie's Corner

The past three weeks have found me in a role that I'm not comfortable with (physically or emotionally), but when we are weak, the Lord's strength is revealed in us. I know that it is His strength that has brought me through.

Getting out of the car on February 13<sup>th</sup>, I fell. After an excruciating ride to the hospital, I was examined and it was determined that my hip was broken. I had surgery on Sunday afternoon, Valentines Day. I am home now, after spending a week in the hospital and another week in physical therapy rehabilitation. I am currently undergoing physical therapy three times a week. I must be feeling better, because these four walls are beginning to look very old. Of course, I am anxious to be back to normal, but these things take time.

I appreciate all the prayers that have been lifted up on my behalf and ask that you would continue to pray for my full recovery. I also want to thank those of you who have called and sent cards. It means so much, when you're going through pain, to know that others care. My being incapacitated has added extra responsibility to my family and to

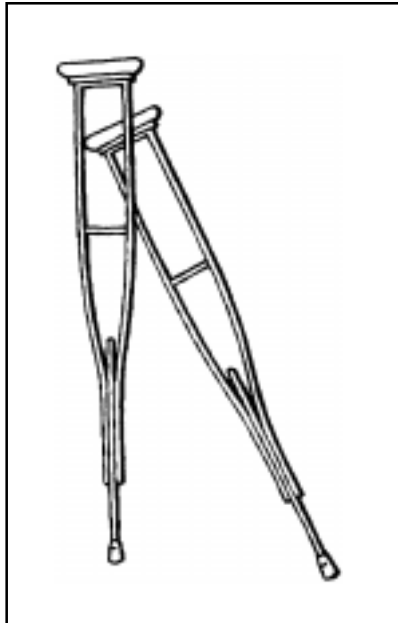
the office staff. Please be aware of the extra load for the office staff when you call in to the office, and try to be patient. I want you to know how much I love and appreciate you all. Thanks for "taking up the slack."

In my January column, I included prayer requests and invited you to send us your special requests. Obviously, being out of the office has prevented me from receiving any prayer requests and including them this issue. If you have an immediate need, you may send it to our e-mail address [aim@aim4jesus.org](mailto:aim@aim4jesus.org), so that we can act upon it.

In the process of learning to reprogram my body to deal with its new restrictions, my physical therapist admonishes me to "think right." Of course, she is talking about the right side of my body.

However, my mind jumped to the state of mind our Heavenly Father desires for us continually. Right thinking is as vital to good health as a heart beat. I just hope you won't have to break a bone to be reminded to "think right."

— *Bonnie*



## Toll-Free Telephone Numbers?



Occasionally, a caller asks why neither AIM nor CAMEM has toll-free phone numbers. The answer is simple. In order to maximize available benefits to recipients we work hard at keeping operating costs to a minimum. For example, did you know that only 1% of net monthly gains from CHF are designated for operations? Very few organizations operate that efficiently. From an administrative standpoint, it demands that we run a very lean machine! We hope you agree that our intentions have your best interest at heart.



*Get Well Soon,  
Bonnie!*



# Perspective on Prayer

BY NANCY HAECKER

I am so thankful that, because of Jesus and His supreme sacrifice, we can come boldly to the throne of God with any want, desire or hurt. However, prayer is much more than voicing our needs. It is praise, adoration, confession, thanksgiving and communing with our wonderful heavenly Father.

Lately, I have become aware that my praying is lopsided. At times my mind is so full of needs (or what I *perceive* as needs) that thanksgiving takes a back seat or is completely ignored. Oh, I may quickly thank God for the usual (food, shelter, family, etc.) but supplication soon takes priority.

One day a friend of mine was praying aloud, when her little boy interrupted her by bringing her the Sears catalog. She was immediately convicted. Her children saw her prayer life as a time to order what she wanted from God. I wonder how many of us, if we stopped to consider, would see ourselves in this same “ordering” role.

I was flipping through my Bible recently and came across a written prayer that I had tucked between the pages years ago. Apparently, the words were significant to me at one time or I wouldn't have cut it out. The title caught my eye, so I decided to take the time to read it.

The author of the prayer wasn't mentioned. Perhaps, he recognized the same ungrateful attitude at times and his awareness moved him to pen the following words.

## **Thank You, Lord**

*Just this once, Lord, I want to come to you with no problems, but simply to say, Thank You:*

- For your forgiveness when I fail*
- For the sheer joy of sleep when I'm terribly tired*
- For the silent strength of humility when pride overtakes me*
- For the justice of your laws when men are cruel*
- For the remedies for sickness when I am ill*
- For the simplicity of orderliness when I face confusion*
- For the assurance that you have made a place especially for me when I feel inadequate among my peers*
- For the joy of helping others when I see people in need*
- For the earthly evidences of your will when I'm trying to find out what life is all about*
- For the reality of your world, when I stray too far into fantasy*
- For the rightness of reasonableness when I panic too quickly*
- For the fun that refreshes when everything gets too serious*
- For the renewal in moments of silence when I'm dizzy being busy in a hectic world.*

*Thank you, Lord, for all these things. But most of all, thank you for your abiding presence that makes every day I live a day of thanks.*

# Unconditional Acceptance

As we go through our daily lives, we often fail to take into account what's going on around us. With this in mind, I want to share with you a story [below] which one of our Agape members, Rachel Baldwin, recently brought to my attention.

Also remember:

*Keep Jesus in YOUR heart!!!*

*-Brother Dave*

I have recently completed my college degree. The last class I took was sociology. The teacher's last project of the term was called "Smile." Each student was asked to go out and smile at three people and then document their reactions.

Soon after this assignment, my husband, youngest son, and I went out to McDonald's, on a crisp March morning. We were standing in line, waiting to be served, when all of a sudden, everyone around us began to back away, and then even my husband did.

As I turned around, I was almost overcome by a horrible "dirty body" smell, and there, standing behind me, were two poor homeless men. As I looked down at the shorter gentleman, closer to me, he was smiling. His beautiful sky-blue eyes were full of God's light as he searched for acceptance. He said, "Good day," as he counted the few coins he had been clutching. The second man fumbled with his hands as he stood behind his friend. I realized the second man was mentally deficient, and the blue-eyed gentleman was his salvation. I held back tears as I stood there with them.

The young lady at the counter asked him what they wanted. He said, "Coffee is all, Miss." I then realized that they just wanted to be warm, but to be able to sit in the restaurant to warm-up, they had to

buy something, and a cup of coffee was all that they could afford. Then I really felt it—a compulsion so great I almost reached out and embraced the little man with the blue eyes. That is when I noticed all eyes in the restaurant were set on me, judging my reaction.

I smiled and asked the young lady behind the counter to give me two more breakfast meals on a separate tray. I then walked around the corner to the table that the men had chosen as a resting spot. I put the tray on the table and laid my hand on the blue-eyed gentleman's cold hand. As he looked up at me, with tears in his eyes, I said, "I'm not the one doing this for you. God is here working through me to give you hope." I started to cry as I walked away to join my husband and son.

When I returned to college, on the last evening of class, I turned in this story as "my project." The instructor read it, looked up at me, and asked, "Can I share this?" I slowly nodded. As she got the attention of the class, and began to read, I realized that in my own way, I had touched the people at McDonald's, my husband, son, and instructor, and every soul who shared the classroom on my last night of college. I graduated with one of the biggest lessons I would ever learn: UNCONDITIONAL ACCEPTANCE.



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