

GIFT GIVERS

Agape International Ministries

October, 2000

His Favorite Jacket

As a service repairman in a large city, my husband worked at all types of places and met all types of people. One of his largest accounts was a chain of convenience stores that were usually located in poorer sections of town. I always dreaded for him to be at one of these locations, especially after dark. The back of every one of the stores was littered with used needles and liquor bottles, and the smell of urine was almost overcoming. You could also be sure there would be at least one drifter loitering around outside, waiting for someone to give him enough money to buy his next bottle. Of course, the repairman was an easy target and was accosted each time he went to his truck for parts or tools. Knowing that money would be used to feed his habit, these requests were always denied.

There were times, however, if my husband sensed that a man was really in need of food or help that he would buy him something to eat or take him to a shelter. I wasn't comfortable with this. I would have preferred that he hurriedly finish his work, pack up, and return to a "safer, nicer" part of town. I loved him for being generous, but I certainly didn't feel like he needed to risk his life for the sake of generosity.

One December morning he was called out to one of these stores. It was a couple of weeks before Christmas, and the weather had turned wintery. As the day went by, I was anxious for him to return home and snuggle into his warm home with his family. By nightfall, he still had not returned, and I was imagining the worst possible scenarios. After all, he was on the wrong side of town.

As I learned later, he had (once again) been approached by a couple of drifters behind the convenience store. The cold wind allowed them to enhance their usual appeal: "Give

us enough to get a bottle to warm us up a little." My husband stopped his work and started telling the men about Jesus. One of them started laughing out loud, declaring that Christianity was nothing more than a bunch of words that didn't



do anything to meet people's real needs. He was quick to point out how his companion, with nothing more than a thin, short-sleeved shirt to protect him from the wind, was shivering from the cold. "Is your Jesus Christ going to keep this man warm?" he reviled.

The Holy Spirit instantly brought a Bible passage¹ to my husband's mind, and he said, "Please forgive me. You're absolutely right. It's wrong of me to start telling this man about Jesus when he is so cold he can hardly listen." Then, without hesitation, my husband took off his jacket (his favorite one) and handed it to the accuser's companion. The shivering man was so surprised and moved by the sudden act of generosity that he had to be urged to take the jacket and put it on. After they talked a while longer, the man indicated that he wanted to hear more about Jesus, and he accepted him as his Lord and Savior.

My husband explained to him that the power of the Lord working in his life could help him break free of the bondage of alcohol and turn his life around. He told him that if he would wait until

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 7...)

¹ James 2:15,16 – "If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?"

Just Sue Me

Editor's note: This article appeared in the Times Record News, Wichita Falls, Texas. Although we did not ask Mr. Gholson's permission to reprint it, we doubt he will object to an extension of his forum.

Some people, it seems, get offended way too easily. I mean, isn't that what all this prayer hullabaloo is all about – people getting offended? Those of us in the majority are always tippy-toeing around, trying to make sure we don't step on the toes or hurt the feelings of the humorless. And you can bet there's a lawyer standing on every corner making sure we don't.

Take this prayer deal. It's absolutely ridiculous. Some atheist goes to a high school football game, hears a kid say a short prayer before the game, and gets offended. So he hires a lawyer and goes to court and asks somebody to pay him a whole bunch of money for all the damage done to him. You would have thought the kid kicked him in the crotch. Damaged for life by a 30-second prayer? Am I missing something here?

I don't believe in Santa Claus, but I'm not going to sue somebody for singing a Ho-Ho-Ho song in December. I don't agree with Darwin, but I didn't go out and hire a lawyer when my high school teacher taught his theory of evolution. Life, liberty, or your pursuit of happiness will not be endangered because someone says a 30-second prayer before a football game. So what's the big deal? It's not like somebody is up there reading the entire book of Acts. They're just talking to a God they believe in and asking him to grant safety to the players on the field and the fans going home from the game. "But it's a Christian prayer," some will argue. Yes, and this is the United

States of America, a country founded on Christian principles. And we are in the Bible Belt. According to our very own phone book, Christian churches outnumber all others better than 200-to-1. So what would you expect – somebody chanting Hare Krishna? If I went to a football game in Jerusalem, I would expect to hear a Jewish prayer. If I went to a soccer game in Baghdad, I would expect to hear a Muslim prayer. If I went to a ping pong match in China, I would expect to hear someone pray to Buddha. And I wouldn't be offended. It wouldn't bother me one bit. When in Rome... "But what about the atheists?" is another argument. What about them? Nobody is asking them to be baptized. We're not going to pass the collection plate. Just humor us for 30 seconds. If that's asking too much, bring a Walkman or a pair of ear plugs. Go to the bathroom. Visit the concession stand... Call your lawyer. Unfortunately, one or two will make that call. One or two will tell thousands what they can and cannot do. I don't think a short prayer at a football game is going to shake the world's foundations. Nor do I believe that not praying will result in more serious injuries on the field or more fatal car crashes after the game. In fact, I'm not so sure God would even be at all these games if he didn't have to be. That's just one of the downsides of omnipresence. If God really liked sports, the Russians would never have won a single gold medal, New York would never play in a World Series and Deion Sanders' toe would be healed by now.

Christians are just sick and tired of turning the other cheek while our courts strip us of all our rights. Our parents and grandparents taught us to pray before eating, to pray before we go to sleep. Our Bible tells us just to pray without ceasing. Now a handful of people and their lawyers are telling us to cease praying. God, help us. And if that last sentence offends you – well... *just sue me!*

– NICK GHOLSON



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Gift Givers welcomes stories and other articles from its readers. If you have an insight or an experience that could inspire or encourage others, we hope you'll send it to us. Although, we can't promise to publish every submission, we truly value what you have to say.

Editors' Note: Views and opinions expressed in this publication do not necessarily represent those of the publishers, the editors, or other staff members. All Scripture references are from the King James Version [KJV], unless otherwise noted.

How to Survive a Heart Attack When Alone

Let's say it's 6:15 p.m. and you're driving home (alone of course), after an unusually hard day on the job. You're really tired, upset, and frustrated. Suddenly, you start experiencing severe pain in your chest that starts to radiate out into your arm and up into your jaw. You are only about five miles from the hospital nearest your home; unfortunately you don't know if you'll be able to make it that far. What can you do? You've been trained in CPR, but the instructor neglected to tell you how to perform it on yourself. Since many people are alone when they suffer a heart attack, this article is in order.

Without help, the person whose heart stops beating properly, and who begins to feel faint, has only about 10 seconds left before losing

consciousness. However, these victims can help themselves by coughing repeatedly and very vigorously. A deep breath should be taken before each cough, and the cough must be deep and prolonged, as when producing sputum from deep inside the chest. A breath and a cough must be repeated about every two seconds without let up until help arrives, or until the heart is felt to be beating normally again. Deep breaths get oxygen into the lungs and coughing movements squeeze the heart and keep the blood circulating. The squeezing pressure on the heart also helps it regain normal rhythm. In this way, heart attack victims can get to a phone and, between breaths, call for help.

Please share this information with as many people as possible. It could save their lives!

From **Health Cares**, Rochester General Hospital "AND THE BEAT GOES ON" (reprinted from *The Mended Hearts*, Inc. publication, **Heart Response**)

JESUS AND THE KINGDOM OF GOD

In the June issue of **Gift Givers**, we began a twelve-part Bible study on Jesus' teaching about the Kingdom of God.

PART 3: THE KINGDOM IS YOURS!

Jesus taught that the Kingdom of God is overwhelmingly and wonderfully different. Speaking in a dry land where a good grain harvest multiplied the seed that was planted some eight to nine times, Jesus pointed to a harvest ten times the normal size (Mk 4:8). He saw the poor free from want, the hungry fully satisfied, the distressed returned to joy (Lk 6:20-21). His thinking challenges our timid attitude towards life. He remembered sparrows sold cheaply for their scraps of meat: "Fear ye not, therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows" (Mt 10:31) We have to trust the generosity of God shown through the working of his Kingdom. We should not worry about food or clothes – the practical

difficulties of life – for God's intention is to care for all with his rich blessing.

But how is this to be done? By a continuing series of divine miracles to bail out everybody? Not so! Jesus questions our understanding of right behavior: "If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone?" (Lk 11:11-13) Truthfully, we know the right way to act towards others. "Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them" (Mt 7:12). The challenge of the Kingdom is for us to treat everyone exactly as we would hope to be treated ourselves. Seekers must learn a generosity which is far more than just doling out gifts to satisfy ourselves; we must learn an overwhelming generosity of spirit which reaches down to the very depths of our being, the place where we find God.

– BROTHER PETER

Something to Consider

Recently, a piece of mail caught my attention. It posed the question, “Where in the world can a foreign mission board fully support a soul-winning missionary for just \$50 a month?” For most of my life, I have been closely associated with church denominations that regularly have special emphasis drives to raise huge amounts of money to support American missionaries overseas. It is estimated that the average American missionary going to a foreign country needs a minimum of \$60,000 a year to live. How could this mission board possibly support a missionary for only \$600? The answer lies with indigenous missionaries. Some see this as the wave of the future in regard to foreign missions.

A few months back, when our pastor mentioned that we were going to begin supporting indigenous missionaries, I had no idea what an indigenous missionary was. However, after reading about it, it seems like much wiser stewardship of God’s money. Using a native Christian to evangelize his nation overcomes many obstacles that Americans face when going to a foreign country. Consider that before an American can even speak to the people, he must

learn the local language. Language school can sometimes take several years to complete and cost a substantial amount of money. Also, in most countries, a missionary from the United States has to adjust to a standard of living well below that to which he is accustomed. Even with the adjustments, he is still frequently viewed as a rich outsider. Another obstacle, which is becoming more and more prevalent, is the fact that many countries now prohibit traditional American mission work. All of these obstacles, coupled with the fact that it has been established that native missionaries are far more effective at 1% of the cost, truly seem to substantiate the rising trend toward indigenous mission work.

The Lord left us with the command of the Great Commission, “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” [Matt. 28:19-20 NASB] While that command is still to be obeyed, with so much anti-Christian, anti-American sentiment in other countries, indigenous mission work may be something to seriously consider. ■

What Do These Countries Have in Common?

- | | |
|-----------------|-------------------|
| 1. Saudi Arabia | 6. Yemen |
| 2. Afghanistan | 7. Comoro Islands |
| 3. China | 8. Maldives |
| 4. Chechnya | 9. Iran |
| 5. Sudan | 10. Morocco |

***These are the ten countries where persecution of Christians is the greatest.
(They are ranked according to the intensity of the persecution.)
Pray for God’s protection of these fellow-Christians!***

For the Love of God

After a few of the usual Sunday evening hymns, the church's pastor slowly stood up and walked over to the pulpit. Before he gave his sermon for the evening, he briefly introduced a guest minister who was in the service that evening. In the introduction, the pastor told the congregation that the guest minister was one of his dearest friends and that he wanted him to have a few moments to greet the church and to share whatever he felt would be appropriate for the service.

With that, an elderly man stepped up to the pulpit and began to speak. "A father, his son, and a friend of his son were sailing off the Pacific Coast," he began, "when a fast-approaching storm blocked any attempt to get back to shore. The waves were so high, that even though the father was an experienced sailor, he could not keep the boat upright, and the three were swept into the ocean as the boat capsized."

The old man hesitated for a moment, making eye contact with two teenagers who were, for the first time since the service began, looking somewhat interested in his story. The aged minister continued with his story, "Grabbing a rescue line, the father had to make the most excruciating decision of his life: to which boy he would throw the other end of the lifeline. He only had seconds to make the decision. The father knew that his son was a Christian, and he also knew that his son's friend was not. The agony of his decision could not be matched by the torrent of waves.

"As the father yelled out, 'I love you, son!' he threw out the lifeline to his son's friend. By the time the father had pulled the friend back to the capsized boat, his son had disappeared beneath the raging swells into the black of night. His body was never recovered."

By this time, the two teenagers were sitting up straight in the pew, anxiously waiting for the next words to come out of the old minister's mouth. "The father," he continued, "knew his son would step into eternity with Jesus, and he could not bear the thought of his son's friend stepping into an eternity without Jesus. Therefore, he sacrificed his son to save the son's friend. How great is the

love of God that He should do the same for us. Our heavenly Father sacrificed His only begotten Son that we could be saved. I urge you to accept His offer to rescue you and take hold of the lifeline He is throwing out to you in this service."

With that, the old man turned and sat back down in his chair. Silence filled the room. The pastor again walked slowly to the pulpit and delivered a brief sermon with an invitation at the end. However, no one responded to the appeal.

Within minutes after the service ended, the two teenagers were at the old man's side. "That was a nice story," politely started one of the boys, "but I don't think it was very realistic for a father to give up his only son's life in hopes that the other boy would become a Christian."

"Well, you've got a point there," the old man replied, glancing down at his worn Bible. A big smile broadened his narrow face, and he once again looked up at the boys and said, "It sure isn't very realistic, is it? But I'm standing here today to tell you that THAT story gives me a glimpse of what it must have been like for God to give up His Son for me. You see, I was that father and your pastor is my son's friend." ■

— SUBMITTED BY ED BRANNUM

In Case You Were Wondering...

Gift Givers has adopted a more forward-thinking naming convention for the date of issue appearing on its cover. Beginning with this issue, the date printed on the front page reflects the month it is expected to arrive in readers' mailboxes, rather than the month it went to press.

The change is intended to produce a more accurate correlation between the cover dates and the actual months in which issues are read. One of the benefits of this new convention is that articles relating to holidays and other current events will more naturally anticipate those events, rather than trailing them.

The last issue of *Gift Givers* was the July, 2000, issue (Vol. 7, No. 4), mailed at the end of July. This issue is October, 2000 (Vol. 7, No. 5). There was neither an August, 2000, nor a September, 2000, issue of *Gift Givers*.

ATTENTION ALL AIM VOLUNTEERS

In the December, 1999, issue of **Gift Givers**, the closing of AIM's USA office was announced. Although the moving of all ministry operations to Belize was to be effective April 1, 2000, an unpublished, six-month grace period has been observed in order to continue processing the many donations and other mail that continue to be sent to the USA address in Austin, Texas. Donations by FAX and phone have also continued to be accepted in Austin during this grace period.

We must now ask for the FULL COOPERATION OF ALL AIM VOLUNTEERS to bring the grace period to a close.

Effective immediately, all donations must be mailed to the Belize address shown below. Donations sent to the USA address are now being forwarded to Belize, delaying their arrival and processing by as much as two weeks. Forwarding mail from the U.S. to Belize is an added financial burden on the ministry. Therefore, this courtesy is likely to be discontinued in the near future.

Mail from the U.S. usually takes ten to fourteen days to reach Belize. Therefore, you will need to send your monthly donations earlier than usual so that they will not arrive past the cutoff date (5th of the month). You may want to consider sending your donations to the Gift-Giving Project a month in advance to avoid missing a distribution due to mail arriving late.

Postal Service Mailing Addresses

AIM
P.O. Box 1896
Belize City
BELIZE, Central America

Telephone, FAX, and E-mail

(If calling from U.S., dial 011 first)
Phone: 501-25-3737
FAX: 501-25-3703
E-mail: aim@btl.net

Express Package Delivery

Marage Plaza
Mile 9½ Northern Hwy.
Ladyville
BELIZE, Central America

AIM will still accept checks by FAX or phone, but only at ministry headquarters in Belize. Since these will now be international calls, Volunteers may prefer to mail their donations.

Donation by personal check or money order is still acceptable. **NOTE: U.S. Postal Money Orders must now be International Postal Money Orders.** (Money orders purchased from sources other than the Post Office are not affected.)

Moving operations to Belize reduces costs, eliminates duplication of staff, and consolidates the ministry's data processing, making it possible to fulfill our mission with greater efficiency and service to you. Thank you for your cooperation and continued support.

(...CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE)

he had finished his job at the store, he would take him to a place where he would get the loving support he needed. When the job was finished, the scoffer had wandered off, but the other man was patiently waiting. As I found out later, the reason my husband was so late getting home that night was because he spent the next four hours taking the man to a special mission and helping him get settled in. Rejoicing in what God had done, he didn't mind that he had to work long after dark to finish his other jobs.

The story could stop here with a happy ending, but the Lord chose to teach this wife an important lesson.

When the Christmas holidays came, we traveled several hundred miles to celebrate Christmas with my family. We always had a large gathering, with everyone exchanging gifts. During the gift exchange, you can not imagine our surprise when my husband opened one of his gifts. It was a jacket – the same color and style as the one he had given away. We were so excited. However, the excitement did not end with that gift. To our amazement, the next gift he opened was also a jacket – an exact duplicate of the first one. None of my family knew about the jacket that he had given away! There was no explanation, but the Lord. He had rewarded my husband's generosity with a double portion and taught this wife about the laws of sowing and reaping.

“Then Peter began to say unto him, Lo, we have left all, and have followed thee. And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's, But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life.” [Mark 10:28-30] ■

With winter not far away, the nights in many parts of the country can already become quite cold. There are many people who, for one reason or another, live in the streets of our cities. Let's be practical with our expression of the love of Jesus. If you can, please donate warm clothes or blankets to a shelter in your area. Your kindness will not go unrewarded.

Relationship vs. Religion

“I am not against going to church, nor against the Lord's prayer and the commandments; ... I pray that we will always have them. But believing is something more; it is coming to Jesus, receiving Him as Savior, bowing before Him, trusting in Him.

“I do not know of any one thing more often repeated in the Scriptures than believing. It is described as a coming, trusting, receiving, and relying, under a felt conviction that we are lost, undone, condemned without Him.”

These words were spoken by the evangelist, George Whitefield, more than 200 years ago. He understood the clear differences between Christianity and man-made religion. Christianity is based solely on what God, through His Son Jesus, did for you; religion is based on man's works, rules, and dogmas. There is no earthly institution that can insure your eternal life. Eternal life is only achieved through faith in Jesus Christ and acceptance of His redemptive work. He invites us to trade our religion for a relationship! [John 3:16-18] ■

Options

In an attempt to address the flood of reports of abandoned babies within the last few years, law makers are now considering adopting programs to meet the needs of these unwanted children. During a 10-month period, 13 abandoned babies were found in Houston, Texas. Three of these were dead. Legislators responded to this tragic situation by making Texas the first state to enact a law offering an easy, anonymous way of giving up a newborn without facing prosecution. From this law, a nonprofit group called the Baby Moses Project was begun. Up to 30 days after birth, a new mother can now leave her unharmed baby at a fire station, hospital, or medical clinic. At least 27 other states are considering adopting similar laws. It is hoped that such options will stem the tide of “thrown-away” children. ■

The Law of Life

**Good trees grow in adversity.
The same is true for men.**

The tree that never had to fight
For the sun and sky and air and light,
That stood out in the open plain,
And always got its share of rain,
Never became a forest king.

The man who never had to toil,
Who never had to win his share,
Of sun and sky and light and air,
Never became a manly man,
But lived and died as he began.

Good timber does not grow in ease;
The stronger the wind, the tougher trees;
The more the storm, the more the strength;
By sun and cold, by rain and snow,
In tree or man, good timber grows.

Where thickest stands the forest growth,
We find the patriarchs of both,
And they hold converse with the stars,
Whose broken branches show the scars
Of many winds and much strife.
This is the common law of life.

— AUTHOR UNKNOWN



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