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MICAH 5:2-5 “But you, O Bethlehem, are only a small village among all the people of Judah. Yet a ruler of Israel will come from you, one whose origins are from the distant past. The people of Israel will be abandoned to their enemies until the woman in labor gives birth. Then at last his fellow countrymen will return from exile to their own land. He will stand to lead his flock with the Lord’s strength, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God. Then his people will live there undisturbed, for he will be highly honored around the world. He will be the source of peace.”



Give the Gift of Christ this Christmas

From a place that the world considered insignificant, God would bring greatness. God made this tiny village of Bethlehem internationally famous when He chose it as the birthplace of Christ. God uses “insignificant” people and places to achieve great things. He can take our broken and useless life and turn it into a blessing to others if we let him. Out of hopeless situations God can bring hope. Out of the confusion and chaos we have created, God can rebuild a world of peace. The prophet Micah foretold of the birth of Christ, but the world had to wait 700 years before God decided to let His son come to live with us. His people needed to accept the consequences of their actions. God removed them from the false security of their own little world and sent them into the chaotic sinful world to help them realize that they needed him. God did this to make them stronger and more righteous. It was there choice whether they would accept and learn from this action or whether they would turn away and abandon Him. Punishment was only a small part of his much bigger plan to restore and heal them. Today we face different pains in our lives that are a consequence of our past sins. We may go through trials in our lives to test our faith and dependence on God. It is part of God’s recovery pro-

gram for his children. In the end, God’s judgments will become a source of great blessing for us if we trust God and obey his will.

God is always working to restore us to dependence on him and constantly showers his grace on us. It is a free gift that is priceless. His son is the only gift we need ever accept to receive all the blessings that God’s children will inherit when we pass from this life to eternal life with Him. It is sad to know there will be some that will not experience all these blessings. As Christians we need to reach out to those that don’t know of Christ’s saving grace. We need to share the love and compassion of Christ through our generosity and kindness. Whether it is a kind word, thoughtful gesture, giving of our resources to the needy or a listening ear. Christ can use all of us to do his work. The useless he will make useful if their hearts are willing to be changed.

Give the gift of Christ this Christmas season and all the year through. The hope of love and peace to a world that needs a shepherd that can love and protect those who believe in Him. After all Jesus is the only true reason for “the season”.

The question I have for you is , **DO YOU BELIEVE ?**

Dr. Harold

Christmas season is well under way. Its so easy to get caught up in the hustle and bustle of shopping, parties, concerts, etc., but we thought we'd take a minute and share with you some of our favorite Christmas traditions and memories.

Angie: *We are really trying to put the emphasis on Jesus during the Christmas season, so we bake a birthday cake for Jesus and sing, "Happy Birthday".*

Sandy: *Last year, I took my 7-year-old granddaughter, Emma, to Wal-Mart where we bought gift certificates. Emma was then able to walk around the store and choose people to give the gift certificates to. When we were driving home, I asked Emma which person meant the most to her. She responded that it was an elderly man in a wheelchair who cried and hugged her when she said, "Merry Christmas".*

Julie: *A favorite Christmas tradition our family has is that we decorate a gingerbread house every Christmas Eve after our church candlelight service. We also read the Christmas story out of Luke, and prepare a simple brunch meal for Christmas morning to eat after opening presents. Our children are all older now and so the gingerbread houses have taken on some elaborate and funny themes, but remain a necessary yearly tradition.*

Debbie: *For the last 45 years, every Christmas, my dad and I make Swedish tea rings. We take a whole day, and spend that day making the dough, waiting for the dough to rise, and putting the rings together. We end up making around 15 of the rings. The kitchen is quite a sight, but its worth it. We also have all of our kids and grandkids over to spend the night on Christmas Eve, and of course, the grandkids get new pajamas.*

Crystal: *For a few years, my parents lived in Hawaii while working for the Air Force. My family had the privilege to go and stay with them for Christmas. What a blessing. For Christmas Day we went to church and then headed out to the beach for a wonderful, unforgettable picnic. One other Christmas we stayed on the volcano on the big Island on a military camp. We stayed in the Roosevelt house and enjoyed walks, roasting marshmallows at night by the glow of the tree and discovering the volcano, an amazing wonder in God's creation. Blessings to you as you remember the Savior.*

Shelly: *Our family re-enacts the Christmas story. Everybody has a part to play, and we even have a narrator.*

Susan: *Our family always reads the story of Jesus' birth before we open our presents.*

Alani: *One of my favorite memories is when our family went up to my grandparents' cabin in northern Minnesota for Christmas. Our cabin was not winterized, so my dad had to set the alarm to get up and put wood in the stove every two hours. We didn't have running water and so couldn't shower. We were probably a smelly bunch, but we had a lot of fun.*

Genny: *Every year, we do the advent calendar with our children. They can't wait to open up the calendar each day and are rewarded with a Starburst. We also have a recordable ornament from our daughter's first Christmas, and we love to listen to the sounds she made during that time.*

Kelly: *Every Christmas Eve, one of the firemen in our town dresses up as Santa. He rides around through town on the fire truck waving to all the kids. Our kids all get dressed in their pajamas and stand outside watching for "Santa" the Fireman. My husband and I also spend Christmas Eve unwrapping all the store packaging on gifts in order to remove all the wires and other contraptions, as well as putting batteries in, just so everything will be ready for our kids to enjoy in the morning.*

Sharon: *When I was in grade school, my parents decided to do something a little different. Instead of spending the \$25 to buy a live Christmas tree, we took that money to the South Side Mission. My sister and I each picked out a little girl in the Mission, took her with us to Szolds, and bought her a toy of her choice, a hat, and a pair of gloves. We then went back to the Mission and played with the children. As we didn't have a tree, my dad got very creative. The first year, Dad made a sleigh out of an old discarded glider swing. We placed our presents in the sleigh, and then after Christmas, our German shepherd pulled us around the neighborhood. The second year, Dad made a tree out of green corrugated paper, taped it to the wall, and we taped our Christmas cards to the tree.*

These are just a few of our favorite memories and traditions during the Christmas season. As we reflect on those favorite memories and traditions, may we **all** cherish the best memory of all—the birth of our Savior.

God bless you and Merry Christmas!