

### January Birthdays:

- 3-Becky Rios
- 9-Jasmine Adams
- 11-Megan Clays
- 14-Margaret Clays
- 20-Danae Ontiveros
- 20-Scott Clays
- 29-Ava Eisenzimmer

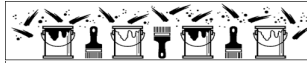


### January Anniversaries:

- 3-Wally & Sandra Engle
- 11-Jared & Pam Seago

**Golden Hills Community  
Church of the Nazarene  
744 Oak St.  
Paso Robles, CA 93446**

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**January**



# Family Connection

Golden Hills Church Of The Nazarene

January 2011

## So What's A Blessing Anyway? By Mark Assi

Have you ever heard someone say, "I'm so blessed because..." Or maybe you've said it yourself. What typically comes next? "I'm so blessed because I have a lot of cool stuff," or, "I'm so blessed because I have a nice house," or, "I'm so blessed because I'm financially well off," etc... I've often heard people say things like this, and I know I've even made similar statements as well; however, I've run into some situations on my spiritual journey that have caused me to look more closely at how I define blessings in my life. I cannot deny that there is biblical justification for material things to be considered blessings, but if blessings had a rating system like movies on Netflix, I would give material blessings one or two stars at best. Joy doesn't come from material blessings, but rather, joy comes from the blessing we have in our relationship with Jesus. Psalm 4:7 says, "You have given me greater joy than those who have abundant harvests of grain and new wine."

I recall when I was about twenty-one years old and attending Cuesta College, I was involved with a Christian club on campus called InterVarsity Christian Fellowship (IVCF). During that year, I had the opportunity to go on a 6-week short term mission trip in India with a group of IVCF students. Boy was I surprised when we arrived in Tamilnadu's capital city, Madrass, on the Bay of Bengal. I remember the mild panic that gripped my mind during the bus ride from the airport to the compound where we were staying for the first couple of days. It was night time, and I couldn't see too much, but what I could see made me apprehensive to say the

least. I remember thinking, "Oh my gosh, what have I gotten myself into?" In the end, the trip was an intense and incredible experience, and I wouldn't trade it for anything.

I remember walking along the streets as people were selling their goods, and I remember the look in their eyes as they hoped we would buy something. Fabrics, clothes, toys, and souvenirs were pushed in front of us as we passed the myriad of vendors trying to eek out a living against the backdrop of rundown buildings, ringing bicycle bells and horn honking motorized rickshaws. I still remember the smell wafting up from large wrought iron cauldrons on the sidewalk, but not having a single clue as to what it was swirling around in the dark boiling waters.

In the midst of all the poverty and hardship gripping the people in southern India, I found that my previous understanding of what it means to be blessed didn't really tell the complete story. I typically had thought I was blessed because of what I had, or how well life was going, but in India, I met a number of Christian brothers and sisters who had nothing, or next to nothing. I met brothers and sisters who simply trusted in God's provision from day to day. I met brothers and sisters who lived at a poverty level I can't understand, but those same brothers and sisters were profoundly filled with a joy that began deep within their hearts and infected others through the smiles on their faces. Every one of them felt blessed.



(Continued on page 4)



# From darkness to light

In the Bible, God speaks often about light and darkness. He gives us much instruction about which path we should choose.

- |           |               |
|-----------|---------------|
| 1. Good   | Righteousness |
| 2. Death  | Children      |
| 3. Go     | Life          |
| 4. Evil   | Come          |
| 5. Adults | Bad           |

Match the opposites and then write the word in the right-hand column in the correct blanks to finish each verse.

“When your eyes are good, your whole body also is full of light. But when they are \_\_\_\_\_, your body also is full of darkness.” Luke 11:34, NIV  
(1)

“I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of \_\_\_\_\_.” John 8:12, NIV  
(2)

“I have \_\_\_\_\_ into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness.” John 12:46, NIV  
(3)

“For what do \_\_\_\_\_ and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness?” 2 Corinthians 6:14, NIV  
(4)

“For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as \_\_\_\_\_ of light.” Ephesians 5:8, NIV  
(5)

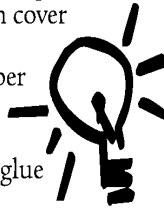
Answers: 1. bad, 2. bad, 3. life, 4. righteousness, 5. children

## LIGHT SWITCH COVER

Everyone who believes in God and lives for him is a child of light. Make this cover for your bedroom light switch to remind you to be a light for God.

### What you need:

- An adult to help
- Light switch cover
- Screwdriver
- Colored paper
- Markers
- Scissors
- Decoupage glue
- Paintbrush
- Craft knife



### What you do:

1. Remove the screws from the cover.
2. On the paper, draw small images related to light and write out “Live as children of light” (Ephesians 5:8, NIV).
3. Cut out the drawings and verse. Make sure they’ll fit on the cover.
4. Paint the cover with a coat of decoupage glue, and then immediately place the drawings and verse on the cover.
5. Paint over them with another coat of glue. Let it dry.
6. Turn the cover over and use a craft knife to cut out the opening for the light switch.
7. Using a screwdriver, place your new light switch cover on your wall.

## The Wonderful Grace of Jesus

“They [the teachers of religious law and the Pharisees] crush people with impossible religious demands and never lift a finger to ease the burden” (Matthew 23:4, NLT).

Have you labored under the impression that Christian life is a crushing burden filled with impossible religious demands? That may sound a little extreme, but one of the dangers we face in our culture is that we approach our spiritual lives the way we approach everything else: we have a job description (we think), and we have a natural desire to meet or exceed expectations. So we work hard, try to do the right things and avoid the wrong things, and following Jesus becomes a heavy burden rather than a joyous journey.

This is religion—religion that doesn’t save anybody from their sin but rather condemns them; religion that doesn’t transform anybody but makes them either proud or defeated; religion that says “shape up or ship out”; religion that, unsurprisingly, isn’t attractive to the people around us. Do you know people who are turned off by the Church and by Christianity because that’s how they see it? Oh that the gospel would once again become REALLY GOOD NEWS, beginning with us, and spreading to the ends of the earth!

“Passion” conference speaker Louie Giglio reminds us of the twelve words of Christmas that are **good news of great joy for all people**:

“A Savior has been born to you; He is Christ the Lord” (Luke 2:11, NIV).

As I read about the teachers of religious law and the Pharisees crushing people with impossible religious demands, I was reminded of how different Jesus is. Check out what Matthew writes about him, quoting the prophet Isaiah:

“*Look at my Servant, whom I have chosen. He is my Beloved, who pleases me. I will put my Spirit upon him, and he will proclaim justice to the nations. He will not fight or shout or raise his voice in public. He will not crush the weakest reed or put out a flickering candle. Finally he will cause justice to be victorious. And his name will be the hope of all the world*” (Matthew 12:18-21, NLT).

Have you felt spiritually weak or like your faith resembles a flickering candle? There is no hope to be found in religion, but there is hope to be found in Jesus! If you are weak, he will not crush you with religious demands. If your faith is flickering, he will not snuff you out with judgment and condemnation. Since this is true, let’s gladly, joyfully, and gratefully accept His invitation:

“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light” (Matthew 11:28-30, NIV).

Blessings in Christ,

*Pastor Mike*

## Grapple Schedule

### January 5th, 2011

Why in the World?  
What Difference Can I Make?  
Serving Others

### January 12th, 2011

Why in the World?  
Why Can't Countries Get Along?  
Pursuing Peace

### January 19th, 2011

Why in the World?  
Why Isn't There Enough To Go Around?  
Sharing With Others

### January 26th, 2011

Why in the World?  
Is Our Environment Really Falling Apart?  
Responsibility for Creation

**Grapple is a group designed to help kids in grades 4-6 apply biblical truths to the issues that they struggle with from day to day. Meetings are from 6:30-8:00 on Wednesday nights in the Upper Room (744 Oak Street) Call Jill at 238-4300 for more info.**

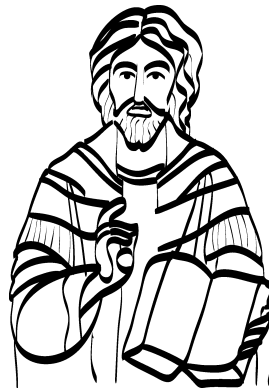
## Bible Quiz

A New Testament book says God designated Jesus as a "high priest" and that Jesus was the most perfect mediator between God and humans.

Choose the name of the book below:

- A. Romans
- B. Hebrews
- C. Matthew
- D. Revelation

Answer: B (See chapter 5:1-10 and chapter 9:11-15.)



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744 Oak St. Paso Robles, CA 93446  
Church: (805) 238-4300

e-mail: pasonaz@charter.net, website: www.pasonaz.org

**Pastor:** Mike Osborne, ghcnaz@charter.net; **Youth Pastor:** Mark Assi, markassi@charter.net  
**Children's Pastor:** Jill Osborne, jillosborne@charter.net

**Church Secretary & Newsletter Editor:** Katrina Clays, pasonaz@charter.net  
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## "Jesus said he really, really loves the children." - Colton Burpo

I don't often get a chance to sit down and read a book cover to cover, but I did on Monday, December 27<sup>th</sup>. I started it at four thirty in the afternoon and finished around nine thirty. I couldn't put it down.

The book is called *Heaven is for Real*. It's the true story of Colton Burpo, a four-year old boy who suffered a burst appendix. During his time in the emergency surgery, Colton was taken up to heaven for what he says was "three minutes."

I'm sure you're thinking – "yeah, sure". But when you hear about the things he told his parents after the ordeal—things that came out over time for the next three or four years—you'll be convinced. I hope you'll choose to read the book. Give yourself some time, because you won't be able to stop.

One of the things Colton told his parents in the days following the surgery was that he had spent lots of time with Jesus and, "Jesus said he really, really loves the children." He would wake up in the morning and tell his dad, "Hey Dad, Jesus told me to tell you that he really loves the children."

At night after they finished reading Bible stories and his parents were tucking him into bed, Colton's last words were "Jesus loves the children!"

When he brushed his teeth, he would garble out, "Remember, Jesus loves the children!"

Finally, his parents told him, "Colton, we get it. You can stop. When we get to heaven, you're exonerated. We'll tell Jesus you did your job."

An interesting part of the story is that Todd Burpo, Colton's dad, is a pastor. Colton's mom, Sonja, in addition to being the pastor's wife, divided her time between a part-time job, and serving in both the worship and children's departments of their small town pastorate in Imperial, Nebraska (population 1,762 in 2008).

Colton's declaration of "Jesus really loves the children" changed the way this couple viewed children's

ministry—and how they recruited volunteers. They became bolder, not apologetic, when asking people to teach, care for, and pray for the kids of their church and community.

*"They lovingly reminded people that Jesus clearly views children as precious—and if he loved kids enough to say that adults should be more like them, then we should spend more time loving them too."* (pg. 107).

I'm asking God to make that more of a reality in our church in 2011. I'm already thankful that our church leadership makes children's ministry a priority when it comes to planning and funding. I know by the outpouring of help from our people when we have a large event like "Light the Night" and VBS that most everyone in our church really loves the kids.

But do we really, really love them? Or are we just going through the motions? I had to ask myself that hard question. I began writing —by hand—the names of all the kids in our church. I started with those in the nursery and finished up with the teens. Writing the names by hand felt more personal. After all, Jesus knit all of them together uniquely, so I didn't think

it would be appropriate for this activity to cut and paste their names into a computer file from our directory. I formed each letter with my pencil, praying as I went, making sure I spelled each name correctly (that's important to kids, you know). When I got done, my hand ached—which didn't surprise me since I don't write things by hand much anymore.

But what did surprise me was that my heart ached too. I've spent enough time with these kids to know that some have soft hearts toward God and some already have hardening hearts. Some come from broken homes. Some have medical problems. Some are having difficulties at school. Some have family problems. Some I don't see very often because the world is pulling them in so many directions – and I'm scared

*(Continued on page 4)*



# JANUARY 2011



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1  NEW YEAR'S Day
2 Celebration Service: 10:30	3	4 Upper Room 2:30-5:30	5 Grapple 6:30-8:00	6	7	8
9 Celebration Service: 10:30	10	11 Board Meeting 6:30 Upper Room 2:30-5:30	12 The R.I.O.T 6:30-8:00 Grapple 6:30-8:00	13	14	15 DPD New Life Community Church Pismo 9:00-12:00
16 Celebration Service: 10:30	17 Martin Luther King Jr. Day  No School	18 Upper Room 2:30-5:30	19 The R.I.O.T 6:30-8:00 Grapple 6:30-8:00	20	21 Youth For Christ Event Turn Your Campus @ Biola University Early bird deadline Jan 11	22
23 Celebration Service: 10:30	24	25	26 The R.I.O.T 6:30-8:00 Grapple 6:30-8:00	27	28	29
30 Celebration Service: 10:30	31	Upper Room 2:30-5:30				

(Continued from page 1)

They didn't have houses, they didn't have cars, they didn't have money, but they felt blessed. How is that? That didn't jive with my American concept of what it meant to be blessed. Maybe Psalm 4:7 makes a little more sense now. I began to look at being blessed as something that was more than circumstantial. I started to think that if I felt blessed because I had a car, what would happen if that car should be taken away? If I felt blessed because I was financial well off, what would happen if suddenly I found myself in financial trouble? Would the loss of those things mean I'm not blessed anymore? My brothers and sisters in India had a deeper sense of what it meant to be blessed. Their blessing is rooted in their relationship with Jesus, and nothing and no one can take that away. If you're blessed because of your relationship with Jesus, you'll never need to ask what would happen if that should be taken away—it never will be. Jesus says in Matthew 28:20, "And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

named Clark W. Griswold. Clark had longed for a grand Christmas bonus from the company he worked for, but instead, he received a one year membership to the Jelly of the Month Club. His sage-like cousin Eddie responded with these immortal words, "Clark, that's the gift that keeps on giving the whole year."

Whether it's a car, a home, lots of money, or the Jelly of the Month Club, we have each received a blessing in the form of a gift that surpasses all others. And the blessing that we have received doesn't just last the whole year, and it's not even limited by our lifespan, but rather, the blessing we have received lasts for eternity. Our truest, richest, most valuable blessing is our relationship with Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior. If you know Jesus, *you are blessed*—PERIOD.

P.S. Just for fun, look through your bible for how many times God blesses people with stuff versus how often He simply blesses the stuff they already have.

An epic tale was once told of a good family man

(Continued from page 3)

that they're going to get swallowed up by the enemy. Some have become like little adults –worrying about how the family is going to make it; worrying about their parents' stress levels.

*"And this same God, who takes care of me, will supply all your needs from his glorious riches, which have been given to us in Christ Jesus."*  
Philippians 4:19

Jesus said that in this world we will have trouble. Kids are not immune, and they need our help to point them to the One who has overcome the world.

Serving Him,  
Jill

So, my question for this year is:  
How can we really, *really* love our kids?  
I don't have all those answers right now. But I'm asking Jesus, since he's the expert in this area. I do know it will take more time than we're giving now, more money than we're giving now, more personal sacrifice and yes--more discomfort than we feel now.

Burpo, Todd and Vincent, Lynn. *Heaven is for Real*. Nashville, Tennessee, Thomas Nelson Publishers. 2010.

That doesn't sound so easy to a gal like me who's turning fifty this year (ouch). So I'm going to be praying more, believing more, and relying on God more than ever.