

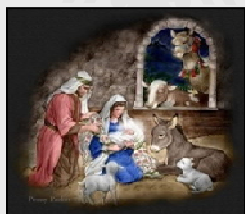


MERRY CHRISTMAS



"...and they shall name him Emmanuel' which means, 'God is with us.'"

Matthew 1:23



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Celebrating Christmas by Christine Stephenson

As Christmas approaches I find myself eagerly anticipating the festivities. For some reason I find that I am really more excited to celebrate Christmas - and I don't know why this year is different but it seems to be. I'm eager for Christmas Eve, singing Christmas carols and then celebrating the birth of our Savior the next day. I am eager for Christmas day and the joy of spending it with close friends. And as the day approaches I find myself spending more and more time amazed that our God would send His Son to earth in the form a tiny human baby. And I am filled with enormous gratitude for such an incredible God who loves us unconditionally.



As I reflect on the reasons for my excitement, I think of John the Baptist who prepared the way for our Messiah. "Prepare the way of the Lord" (Matt 3:3) he said. John was calling people to repentance (turning to God away from sin), a renewal of genuine piety and a time of preparation for the kingdom that would be inaugurated by the Messiah. He was calling people to live the life God had called them to live - a life of sharing with the needy, of integrity and of satisfaction with what they had (Luke 3:10-14).

In the time leading up to Christmas day, I think John the Baptist would ask us to "prepare the way of the Lord." Advent is a time of preparation to commemorate and celebrate the birth of our Messiah. It is a time to contemplate the true meaning of Christmas and why God sent His Son to us here on earth. It is a time to reflect on how we can best honor Jesus as we celebrate His birth - I think that is best done by simply being Jesus to those around us. It is a time to seek the face of the Lord, as my Congolese friends would say. Advent is also a time of action. It is a time to put into action the call of Jesus - to feed the hungry, invite the lonely and those without family and friends into our homes, to visit the sick and imprisoned, to help the broken and wounded, to stand for truth and justice, to bring about unity, to be Jesus. And most of all, Christmas is a time of celebration, a time to remember God's great compassion and unconditional love for us all. "And they shall name him Emmanuel" (Matt 1:23). God is with us. No wonder I am excited about Christmas!

Let's put aside the commercialization of Christmas and remember the true reason for this season and celebrate. And as we do, let us answer the call of John the Baptist to think about our relationship with God, to turn away from those things that take us away from God, and to live fully the life that God has called us to. May we be the hands, feet and heart of Jesus here on earth..

MTS Groups for Men by Mike Rehm

There we were, seven of us gathered in a circle, seated in chairs. Our individual reasons for coming varied but what was common to all of us was a desire to participate in a MTS small group for men. After a warm welcome by the facilitator, everyone introduced themselves. Then the leader began sharing. I saw a noticeable settling in the room that night as we were drawn in to his story. My efforts to take stock and size up the other men seemed less important now as I found myself listening, relating and somehow being comforted, though I'm not sure how or why this was so.

What transpired over the coming weeks was nothing less than remarkable. Men, who for the most part were total strangers, began to bond. There are many ways of describing it...a process of friendship, the formation of brotherhood, camaraderie. My personal experience was an increasing sense of safety. I could share pieces of my history with them - I could share *me* and it would be ok. We were developing respect for each other as walls of isolation began to crumble and the infinitely larger reality of God's redemptive love began to break through.



We Are the Church Without Walls by Steve and Celestia Tracy

We are living in extraordinary times. Our post-modern culture is demanding of us positional sacrifice. God hasn't called us to a pseudo-reality but to model a gutsy faith in a healing and redemptive God. What is our mandate? To "bring good news to the poor – to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives." (Isaiah 61:1) The most elegant expression of this scripture is the process of healing – moving close to each other in community so that we don't just know about another's pain, we carry that pain as if it is our own. We have a hurting world that longs for our engagement. We are to be in the streets and to **know** the pain of abuse, the pangs of hunger, and the terror of being alone. And what are we surprised to find there? The presence of Christ - deeper levels of intimacy, healing and joy than we have ever known. We find color. We find life and joy. We find ourselves.

*Then your light shall break forth like the dawn,
And your healing shall spring up speedily;
The glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard.
If you pour yourself out for the hungry,
And satisfy the desire of the afflicted;
Then your light shall rise in the darkness
And your gloom be as the noonday,
You shall be like a watered garden,
Like a spring of water, whose waters do not fail.*

Isaiah 58:8-11

"The place that God has for you is the place where your deepest gladness and the world's deepest hunger meet." (F. Buechner)

Thank you for being a part of God's church without walls. We do this together.

Steve and Celestia

*"I will honor Christmas
in my heart, and try to
keep it all the year."*

Charles Dickens

A Successful Year - Thanks to Our Supporters

This year has been one of incredible blessing and thanksgiving! We have seen and experienced the Lord in ways that can barely be expressed by words. Our Lord is so faithful to provide for not only our needs but many times our wants. Like the time we wanted a new computer because the old one was so slow. God was not slow in responding to that request as immediately after we prayed someone in the group offered an extra one they had! We have been blessed to provide training this year to over 23 churches many of whom are starting groups in 2010. We have men's groups happening on a regular basis—in fact two beginning this January! We had a volunteer who translated the Healing Art Handbook into Spanish for a group to take to Honduras! We were awarded a grant that has allowed us to translate our workbook and facilitator guide into Spanish (soon to be finished)! That grant also provided the funds to create training videos which, when completed, will allow us to reach and train many more leaders across the country and world with the hope God provides through His healing! We have so many people who serve within this ministry by facilitating, praying, fasting, volunteering, giving financially both through donation and discounts, writing, sharing, translating, speaking, and allowing the love that God has showered on them to spill out onto others! We wouldn't have been able to do what we have without you! Thanks be to God who hand selected each one of you for the work you do...and you do it so well!!!

Thank You from the MTS Team

News, Events and Reports visit www.mendingthesoul.org

For up to date news and reports visit our website. There you will also find a listing of future events, articles, research and resources. Our online MTS store offers various resources and products for sale.

Mending the Soul Student Edition

As you may remember, the *Mending the Soul Student Edition* was written by Kristi Ickes as a simplified adaptation of Dr. Tracy's book. Its purpose was to address the needs of hurting adolescents (Jr. High – College) in both Christian and secular settings. In October 2007, Mending the Soul Ministries self-published 500 copies of the *Student Edition* in order to pilot the material in several public schools, counseling agencies, and churches throughout Arizona. Kristi offered trainings for youth workers (which many of you attended) and began developing a Small Group Facilitator's Guide.

Where did it go?

Much to our surprise, the 500 original copies of the *Student Edition* sold out in six months without any formal advertising. This emphasized to us the vast need for quality abuse healing material for adolescents. Before printing more copies we talked with Zondervan (the publisher of Dr. Tracy's book) since they own the copyright on the material. Zondervan asked us to write a proposal to Youth Specialties (Zondervan's youth ministry division) asking them to publish the book. Kristi submitted the proposal to Youth Specialties in August of 2008. Then we waited. And waited!

Now what's happening?

A few weeks ago we received an email from Youth Specialties saying that they want to publish the *Student Edition*! Youth Specialties has an excellent reputation and is one of the foremost trusted resources in youth ministry. This spring we will be doing some editing and adding scripture into the *Student Edition*. We will work throughout 2010 with editors and the tentative release date for the *Student Edition* is fall of 2011!

How can we help?

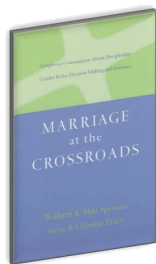
1. Please pray for us as we edit the book. Pray that the process will go smoothly and the end result will be something that we are proud of and that God will use to heal hurting teens.
2. Pray that God would provide a way to get this material into the hands of non-believing students across the country.
3. There are hundreds of you who have attended adolescent trainings with Kristi, purchased copies of the book, and who have used the *Student Edition* in your work/ministry. We need your feedback! Good and bad. Please send whatever you've got to kristi.ickes@gmail.com.

Thanks for your patience, support, and sharing our excitement!

Kristi, Steve & Celestia

Marriage at the Crossroads: Book Review

Have you ever wondered how egalitarian and complementarian marriages play out differently on a day-to-day level? Are there marriages that last? How can a couple who loves Jesus set and maintain a course for an intimate marriage that honors Christ first? How can they be disciples of Christ first, and loving, supportive spouses as well? What about submission?



Here you will find a wealth of solid, biblically sound, hard-won counsel from two couples who each have shared their lives together for more than thirty years. The Tracy's are passionate about a strategy that grounds our understanding of marital roles in the relationships and roles within the Godhead. The overriding emphasis in the Father/Son relationship is mutuality and intimacy. So it is in marriage – husbands are called to an incarnational headship, which involves initiating, protection/provision, and honoring/empowering in the unbroken context of oneness and love. Therefore, submission is based on a love relationship in which one party yields to another who uses his position to sacrifice on her behalf.

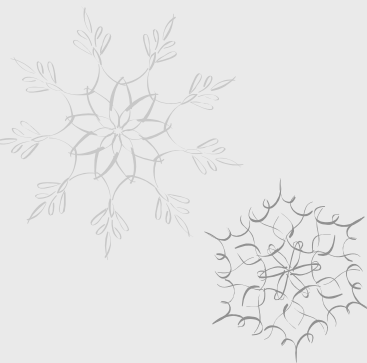
The Tracy's don't just argue a theory of marriage. They tell their own stories of trial and error, growth and pilgrimage.

Marriage at the Crossroads: Couples in Conversation About Discipleship, Gender Roles, Decision Making and Intimacy, IVP Academic (paperback) by Aida and William Spencer & Steven and Celestia Tracy



*"What is Christmas? It is
tenderness for the past,
courage for the present,
hope for the future."*

Agnes M. Pharo



God grant you the light in
Christmas, which is faith; the
warmth of Christmas, which is
love; the radiance of Christmas,
which is purity; the righteousness
of Christmas, which is justice; the
belief in Christmas, which is truth;
the all of Christmas, which is

Christ

Wilda English

A Christmas Prayer

Eternal God,
This holy night is radiant with the brilliance of your one true light.
May that light illuminate our hearts and shine in our words and deeds.
May the hope, the peace, the joy, and the love represented by the birth in Bethlehem this night fill our lives and become part of all that we say and do.
May we share the divine life of your son Jesus Christ, even as he humbled himself to share our humanity.
Amen.

Rev. Richard J. Fairchild



"The birth of Jesus made possible not just a new way of understanding life but a new way of living it."

Frederick Buechner



Donating Made Easy

Often times we find ourselves with a desire to donate to the work the Lord is doing through a particular ministry or organization but are uncertain exactly how to go about it or the necessary steps may seem difficult or time consuming. We would like to share with you some of the ways others who are committed to supporting this ministry have taken some easy steps to partner with us financially.

- Monthly donations scheduled through your own on-line payment service. Just add Mending the Soul as one of your regularly scheduled payments. You just need provide your service with our name and address...they'll do the rest.
- Safe and secure online donations through PayPal on our website. Just go to the website and click the donate button located at the top right or click this link www.mendingthesoul.org/donate/. (You do not have to have a PayPal account to use this option.)
- Monthly automatic donations to your Visa or MasterCard through Mending the Soul. Just give us a call at 866-535-5044 x 704 to speak to us and provide your credit card information. We will process the amount you choose on your specified day each month.
- Of course you can always send checks to: Mending the Soul, PO Box 97636, Phoenix, AZ 85060



Information

For more information on MTS Ministries

- *resources,*
- *products,*
- *speakers, or*
- *training*

please visit our website at:

www.mendingthesoul.org

email us at

info@mendingthesoul.org

call us at

866-535-5044

or write us at

Mending the Soul
Post Office Box 97636
Phoenix, AZ 85060

Praying for You and Us...

Dear MTS friends...thank you for letting us know how we can best pray for you. We are family and what effects one effects us all. As MTS shares needs with you, please know that your needs are important to us. It is a privilege to be able to join you in prayer and together see how our Abba Father answers. He loves you, cares for what you care about, and is always present to hold you and to help you in joys as well as in deepest needs. Blessings! Janet Martin.

Please pray specifically for:

- The completion and printing of the Spanish translations and the final production of the training videos.
- The Lord's direction in Steve and Celestia's writings and the time needed for completion of the projects He has placed on their hearts and in their hands.
- God's financial provision for the day to day operations of the ministry.
- The continued healing of those who have begun their journey with the Lord in an MTS group. May He provide all they need to continue to experience His love for them and share it with others.
- The many women and men we know who have been deeply wounded by abuse.
- The MTS Team as they plan and prepare for 2010.

We would love to pray for you! Send us your prayer requests through our contact form on our website.