



Giving Lives to Save Lives

For one couple, giving to those in need changed not only  their lives but also the makeup of their family—and the course of their ministry. In August 1989, missionaries Charlie and Cathy Milbrodt heard of twin-boy infants who had miraculously escaped death. After traveling deep into the jungle of the Golden Triangle region of Thailand, they purchased the boys—who weighed 4 and 5 pounds and were filled with infection—for a mere \$4.

The Milbrodts set out in search of a home for the babies but soon realized that God’s plan for them was to raise the boys and start a children’s home for other unwanted young people. It wasn’t long after the twins’ birth that the Milbrodts launched Abundant Life Children’s Home, which after 20 years is still providing clothing, food, shelter, medical support and an education to the “unloved” children of Thailand. The Milbrodt twins, now in college, have plans to graduate school and return to Thailand to help their parents with the ministry.


Giving to Fix a Home and Mend a Heart

Chris Young’s trailer was in disrepair before heavy rains  saturated Windsor, N.C., in September. So when the river near his trailer overflowed into his home, his only source of shelter became completely unlivable—until Samaritan’s Purse disaster relief team stepped in to help with repairs. The Red Cross also contributed by donating enough money to buy Young

(pictured left) and his family a new bed, microwave, space heater and linens.

Seeing the change in Young was remarkable, says Todd Taylor, who headed the compassionate effort in Windsor. “When he came in Friday morning he was weeping and very emotional. He did not have a place to stay and [had] no hope. Chris knows the Lord, and as we discussed what we could do, all he would say was he knew the Lord would make a way. He is so excited and his faith in the Lord’s provision is so incredibly strong and unwavering [now].”

Giving Perspective


From the first grade, Marida Lopez was taught to believe  that a woman’s only lot in life is to have children and care for her family. But something in Lopez (pictured above) yearned to do more, though she didn’t know how to accomplish it.

Since her first year of school, Lopez has been sponsored by the missions and relief ministry Food for the Hungry. Her sponsor, in addition to financially supporting her, would visit her and share Christ with her. “I became more confident about my uniqueness and what God could do through me,” Lopez says.

Food for the Hungry has helped Lopez complete middle school and eventually become the first person in her family to finish high school. She is now a bilingual teacher of Spanish and Pokomchi, her native language. “I am very happy because I have accomplished something that I knew God had planned for me. But I wouldn’t be where I am today without the help of Brad Titus, my sponsor. I have a lot of gratitude and respect for him.

Because of his love and generosity, I too can be an example of courage and hope to many young people in my community.”


Giving Soles to Bless Souls

For 10-year-old Alex Chipilipili, walking barefoot meant  more than just having dirty feet at night. For someone who'd never worn a pair of shoes until recently, it meant having sores and incessant itching caused by blood-sucking parasites that found a breeding ground in the cracks of his heels and between his toes. “I have been bothering my parents to [see] if they could buy me shoes, but they tell me that they don't have money,” Alex says.

But one gift to World Vision, a partner of TOMS shoes, changed everything for Alex; his mother, Mary Chipilipili; and his brother after they each received a new pair of shoes.

“It is shameful and heartbreaking to fail to provide for children when they ask for something,” Mary says. “I am really humbled, and today I will sleep with a free mind and joyful heart.”

All's Fair in Love and Coffee

Almost everyone loves a good cup of Joe. But not every  coffee company promotes love with each bean. The Atlanta-based Land of a Thousand Hills Coffee (LTHC) is not just in the business of producing high-quality java, but also

using their brew to bring justice in the name of Christ to Rwanda, where they grow their beans.

“God calls us to engage the good news of the gospel through both word and deed,” owner Jonathan Golden says. “Eighty percent of the coffee Christians drink at home and at church exploits the people who grow it. We should choose to brew a coffee that matches the message we preach.”

Through a partnership with farmers affected by the Rwandan genocide of 1994, LTHC participates in “community trade”—paying above-market wages to workers—in an industry where exploitation is common practice in certain places. They also provide microfinance loans to Rwandans, and they build sustenance farms for the region’s malnourished orphans. All their beans are grown 100 percent naturally. For this company, coffee isn’t just a drink, it’s a symbol of community, healing and justice.

Seeing Jesus in 20/20

✘ Many Christian groups make it their business to try to cure spiritual blindness. But Eyes of Faith Optical in West Middlesex, Pa., seeks to address spiritual blindness by helping people with their physical eyesight first.

The organization is the first faith-based company to be members of the Opticians Association of America. But their greatest accolade as a company is that they have pledged 10 percent of their gross revenue to children’s charities. They have also partnered with *Restoring*

to give one pair of free reading glasses to faith-oriented mission groups for every pair sold through their partners.

“There are so many people in developing countries that can’t work or read because they simply can’t see,” says co-founder Jim Schneider. “We can change many lives by giving the gift of sight with Eyes of Faith.”




Say What?!

“This tattoo symbolizes my lifelong commitment to Christ and to give back to the community.”

–Kyle Steven Bonenberger, lead pastor of City Church in Anaheim, Calif., who was among six congregants to have variations of the City church logo tattooed on their arms, shoulders or feet to celebrate the church’s one-year anniversary. the tattoos are an outward statement of their ongoing commitment to their community and church, which has had hundreds of salvations its first year.

The Changing Poor

 Jeff Nene has been seeing a lot of familiar faces at Convoy of Hope events this year—and that concerns him. People who volunteered last year are now standing in line to receive the groceries and other goods the Assemblies of God ministry distributes annually in 50 cities nationwide.

“We see the face of the poor changing,” says Nene, Convoy of Hope’s senior director of communications and technology. Whether the nation is in a recession, depression or double-dip

recession, “The fact of the matter is the number of the poor—people living in poverty—is increasing.”

A Season to Remember – Day 2

☒ To help us celebrate the most wonderful time of year, *Charisma* asked several artists to share a favorite Christmas memory or tradition. From Dec. 20-24, each day we will feature two artists who shared their thoughts with us.

From all of us at *Charisma*, Merry Christmas!

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Two of my favorite traditions during the Christmas season are to attend candlelight services at church and to drive around and look at the Christmas lights in the community. –Mark Lee of Third Day

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The smell of baking in my grandma’s house. Little squares of individually wrapped Cadbury chocolates. Country walks looking for holly growing wild in the hedges. The electricity in the air on Christmas Eve. Roaring fires and fairy lights. Raucous laughter. Longed-for-presents played with over and over again. The feeling of belonging to the best family in the world ... and the wonder of knowing we get to do it all again next year! –Kathryn Scott

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Character Sketch

This month's bible study | Read Zechariah 9-11, Matthew 21:1-5

Jesus illustrated His humility when He chose the lowly donkey as His servant

When we think about the biblical story of Christmas, what often comes to mind are mangers, wise men, angels, shepherds and stars. But we don't often think about donkeys.

Donkeys are small, unglamorous beasts of burden. While they're useful for such things as bearing firewood, hauling produce to market or pulling up roots and stumps, they aren't animals that we associate with pedigree or status. You've probably never heard someone say, "What a beautiful donkey you have!"

On the Front Lines of Children's Ministry

Bill Wilson has spent the last 30 years taking Sunday school to inner-city kids

Bill Wilson has been thrown off a building, mugged and shot in the face. But none of that has stopped him from leading sidewalk Sunday school every week in New York's inner city.

As he marks 30 years of ministry this year, he says the thing that has kept him going is simply commitment. "It's like anything else; it's a decision," Wilson says.