

Feedback January 2011

Stay Debt-Free For The Holidays!

Getting into the spirit of the holiday season is no reason to go into debt ("No More Plastic Holidays!" by Amie Streater, November). Retailers and charge-card companies pull out all the stops in an effort to make people think that buying gifts is what gives holiday seasons their meaning. Debt-free gift-giving, however, will warm one's heart far more than the shock of a higher charge-card statement to begin the brand-new year.

*Haven Swess,
via e-mail*

Stormy Weather

James W. Goll's testimony is awesome ("When You Have Done All"; October). I can relate to his story of pain and holding steadfast to faith. I lost my mother, my youngest sister and my best friend all within a year and a half. My sister suffered from cancer, but it did not cause her faith to waiver. Jesus' name was the last name she uttered. One must continue to look to God and trust in Him regardless of the type of "weather" a storm brings.

*Sheila Church,
via e-mail*

This was a wonderful testimony from James W. Goll that will give hope to many. There is no magical formula or doctrine for Christian living. Saints do get sick, saints do die, saints do suffer, and God is in control. We can't just speak problems away. God has a higher purpose, and His ways are not ours. American Christianity needs to rethink its understanding of

Scripture.

name withheld

Is 'Labeling' Going Too Far?

I am confused by the article "Terms of Offense" by Eitan Shishkoff (October). He states that Jews, who believe in Christ as the Messiah, are to be called "Messianic Jews" and not Christians. Aren't all Jewish people Messianic Jews? Isn't the belief in the eventual coming of the Messiah a basic and fundamental part of traditional Judaism? Shishkoff makes the statement, "We are a curiosity because we tear down the wall between Jews and Jesus erected by both church and synagogue." Really? It seems to me that what you are doing is building a wall of distinction that identifies Messianic Jews as something "curiously" special, set apart and perhaps set above mere Christians. It is this requirement for special "labeling" that is so very divisive to the church today. When Jesus Christ called His disciples, He did not differentiate between classes, races, labels or occupations. If the end times are near, shouldn't we as believers in Jesus Christ as the Messiah try to find more ways to come together rather than trying to invent ways to separate us?

*Art Handy,
Tybee Island, Ga.*

If it is true that Jews do not want to be called Christians, I do not blame them one bit. When I look back at all of what has been done in the name of Christianity, I don't particularly want to be called one either. If I understand correctly, to be a Christian means being like Christ. I am a member of the body of Christ and I just don't understand the lack of love shown by many so-called Christians. People who are Christians need

to live and act like Christ in word and thought and deed.

*Velma Harding,
Coffeyville, Kan.*

More Substance, Please

It seems that this recent “dumbing down” of our spiritual heritage leaves believers less informed and subsequently less empowered to counteract ungodly forces of the culture. If helping people become “fully devoted followers of Christ” is the goal, then isn’t providing full knowledge of spiritual gifts a practical step in that process? Having an intimate awareness of the Holy Spirit and yet refusing to share that with one’s own congregants seems a bit like sending troops out to battle without adequate armor and arsenal.

*Darla Haas,
Little Rock, Ark.*

My Turn

As a pastor, I too am frustrated and embarrassed by the hypocrisies, inconsistencies and fabrications of the charismatic movement, as Greg Surratt pointed out (“How to Be Charismatic Without Being Crazy”; November). After pastoring for 27 years, I can share my own horror stories of embarrassing moments watching people act and minister in bizarre ways, claiming it was the Lord. My greatest concern is that somehow I become an apologist for doing church “the crazy way” or be seen as one who is simply anchored to the old way of doing things. Nothing could be further from the truth. Just as I would affirm that Greg is not trying to corral the Holy Spirit, I am not trying to advocate for a three-ring circus either.

I think Greg has fallen into the ditch many a philosopher has found by analyzing the landscape accurately but answering it with faulty solutions. Critique is somewhat easy because human

nature can always “pick at specks” in others’ eyes or even the church’s practices. The hard part is a solution. The word crazy, for example, is a slippery concept. Most of the times God moved in Scripture supernaturally tended to look crazy to the natural mind.

I too, like Greg, have been disillusioned by much of the charismatic silliness. I have pondered on more occasions than I can count just how edgy and crazy a church should be. I believe that one of the greatest mistakes pastors make in our current era is to embrace the trendy and not see the eternal. It is easier to rest a ministry on management theory with occasional Scripture sprinkled in than it is to rest it on the whole counsel of God. No pastor wants to be “seeker-alienating.” No pastor likes seeing people walk out the door. However, every pastor needs to remember that this is God’s house, and He needs to be the most comfortable person there.

*Kevin R. Baird,
Charleston, S.C.*