



Leader's Digest

Christian Ministries Conference: An Education of the Heart

We are excited to have another strong line up of workshops coming together for our biennial Christian Ministries Conference (CMC), scheduled for Saturday, February 25, 2012 at Troy Christian High School in Troy, Ohio.



Dr. Gary Wilber, Superintendent and Founder of Troy Christian Schools in Troy, Ohio will be our keynote speaker. Gary began TCS over 30 years ago as an

obedient step of faith to God's calling to provide Christian education not only to his family but to families all around him. Gary is passionately committed to developing a biblical lens in the hearts and minds of students for Christ's kingdom. Gary will

challenge us to not just make Christian Education something that takes place on a Sunday morning at church but is something that happens 24/7 as we actively engage life and seek to live out the biblical principles we have been taught.

Workshops will focus on a variety of ministry areas of interest to the local church. More details regarding the various workshops will be available in early January.

The cost to come to CMC is totally underwritten by the district, making this an excellent opportunity to offer your key church leaders some beneficial training and encouragement free of charge. This event only comes around every two years, so it won't be until 2014 that we offer something like this again, so please encourage those in ministry to attend.

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Cost: \$85
per person

Guest Speaker:
Dr. Jeff Kephart, Senior Pastor of Trinity Church in Middleburg Heights, OH.

March 2-4, 2012
Embassy Suites Blue Ash

From Our District Superintendent



IT'S CHRISTMAS!

When I was young (a long time ago) Christmas

was an interesting experience. Dad was pastoring a small church in Michigan and we did not have a lot of money. I remember one year that Dad was excited because a truck carrying Christmas trees lost one on the road and Dad was able to pick it up. It meant we could have a tree and we didn't have to pay for it.

As a result of our economic status most of my Christmas presents were the proverbial socks, shirts and underwear. We did receive a toy, and maybe on a good year, two toys. I remember when I was about 9 or 10 years old, I wanted a basketball very badly. It was all I thought about.

My parents were of the sneaky kind. They did their best to disguise presents. I remember my mother bought my father a sweater and wrapped it in a very large box and put a lump of coal in the bottom of the box. That way the present looked and felt larger and heavier than was true. (When he would ask for a hint she simply told him it would keep him warm.)

Under the tree was a present marked "For Keith (my older brother) and Dale." It was a very large box, the kind that could have held a lot more than a basketball. Yet, I knew they were a bit expensive and it would have been a sacrifice for my parents to purchase one.

Just before Christmas, and for some now forgotten reason, I was home alone. The lure of the

present got to me and I began to look at the box closely, pick it up, shake it, etc. The temptation was greater than I could handle and I began to pick at the scotch tape until I was able to open one end of the box and look inside.

I was devastated. I moved the crumpled up newspapers and saw a winter cap and pair of gloves! I didn't need a cap and gloves, I needed a basketball. I rewrapped the package and carefully placed in back under the tree.

Christmas Eve came and we gathered around to open our packages. (We always did it Christmas Eve as Dad wanted to sleep in on Christmas morning.) We took our turns opening the presents, revealing the usual amount of clothing. I refused to open the large package addressed to my brother and me.

When it was the last package to be opened, I pushed it toward my brother so he could open it. As he did he revealed only one cap and one pair of gloves. They were both his size and I thought my parents had pulled another fast one on him by putting both of our names on it.

Dad told me to dig through the crumpled newspaper in the box and I did so with little enthusiasm. When I reached far enough into the box which I would have been able to see a basketball if there was one present, I quit digging. Dad told me to keep going. In the

very bottom was a deflated basketball. I was excited as any little boy could be. We pumped it up and spend most of the day playing outside, even in the cold.

That day I was a little like the Israelites were the day Jesus was born. They expected one thing and when that did not materialize as they thought it should, they were disappointed. They wanted a King on a throne, not a baby in a barn.

The innkeeper also missed all that was going on right outside his door because he was busy making money and probably thinking of all he could purchase with his income.

It was the humble shepherds, who took time to stop, bow down and worship the Son of God, Savior of the world.

So, which group do you belong to this Christmas season? Are you like the Israelites who want more than you think you have in Jesus? Do you want Jesus for who He is or are you trying to remake Him into the image of what you want Him to be for you?

Or are you like the innkeeper, only thinking of all the stuff you will receive?

Why not be like the shepherds? Why not really take time to stop, bow down and worship Him. **Luke 2:10-11 (NIV)** ¹⁰ But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you **good news of great joy** that will be for all the people. ¹¹ Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; **he is Christ the Lord.**"

Merry Christmas!



From Our Director of District Ministries



I'm Doing My Best

"I'm doing my best!" is the cry usually uttered just before a person goes down in failure.

If you can't win or succeed at something, you might as well let everyone know you did your best trying. This is usually followed by some sort of emotional breakdown. We've told Jenna and Jillian countless times that while grades are important, the most important thing is for them to do their best, which includes reading the directions a couple of times, concentrating, and always checking their work.

There are a couple of classes like gym and music where effort counts towards the final grade, but for the most part, grades are based on results. Our daughter, Jenna, struggles sometimes with math. She does her best but at times the answers don't come quick enough, which leads to frustration. Frustration leads to crying, "I'm doing my best!" which leads to her giving up for awhile. We're very proud of Jenna, our 1st quarter honor roll student, as we are Jillian, but from time to time we still see some interesting papers come home.

Sometimes our best isn't good enough. A while back, Jean and I were on a trip travelling down I-70. I was driving and a little bored so I passed the time reading the exit signs that tell you what kind of food, gas and lodging were at the various exits. One sign caught my eye. It was for a restaurant called "All Max's Best." Slapped across the front of it was a sticker that read "CLOSED." I looked over at Jean

and said, "Apparently Max's best wasn't good enough." How humiliating it would be to put your best out there only to have it rejected by others. I know the important thing is to do one's best, but when that best ends up in failure, it's kind of deflating to the ego.

Usually that failure leads to the blame game. Jillian always blames Jenna, Jenna always blames us as her parents. My scapegoat of choice happens to be Jean. Sometimes it's easiest to just blame God, which is what Adam did in the garden.

It's also what Steve Johnson of the Buffalo Bills did after dropping a game-winning touchdown in a 19-16 overtime loss to the Pittsburgh Steelers last year. The victory slipped away as the ball slipped through the fingers of a wide-open Johnson in the end zone.

After the game, Johnson tweeted, "I praise you 24/7!!!! And this is how you do me!!! You expect me to learn from this??? How???! I'll never forget this!! Ever!! Thx Tho..." Johnson's coach, Chan Gailey, said after the game, "In this business, there's two types of people, the humble and the humbled. If you're not in the first group, you'll be in the second group at some point in time." Ouch!

Let me make a few aside remarks here... First, never tweet when you're upset and second, I'm not sure God reads tweets. Anyway, the point to be made here is that sometimes our best isn't good enough and we have no one to



blame but ourselves. God didn't make Adam sin in the garden and he didn't make Steve Johnson drop the game winning pass.

Coming Events



- ✓ **December 10, 2011**
Youth & Kids Quizzing Begins
Pleasant View Missionary Church
- ✓ **December 28-30, 2011**
3DYC
Grand Wayne Center, Fort Wayne, IN
- ✓ **January 27-29, 2012**
District-Wide Prayer Weekend
- ✓ **February 2-4, 2012**
Pastors & Wives Retreat
Embassy Suites in Blue Ash
- ✓ **February 25, 2012**
Christian Ministries Conference
Troy Christian High School
- ✓ **March 2-4, 2012**
Keeping the Faith
Embassy Suites in Blue Ash

We mess up and make mistakes all the time because we're flawed human beings. We screw up because we have sin in our lives, which makes our best not even close to good enough. I think Isaiah the prophet said it best, "All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away." (Isaiah 64:6)

So far this hasn't been the most
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enjoyable Christmas digest article I've ever written, but its message is an important one. Our best will never be good enough to measure up to God's righteous standard. Does this mean that when we blow it we can simply get frustrated and give up because we're sinners anyway? Maybe we should just blame God for everything? I don't think so.

You see, while our best isn't good enough, God's best is. He sent his Son Jesus to this earth as a babe, to live a sinless life, to do for us what we could not do for ourselves, live a holy life pleasing to God, and then become our sacrifice for sin by



dying on a cross. Thankfully, Jesus' best was good enough to carry the day.

"I can now do everything through [Christ] who gives me strength." Phil 4:13. In and of myself, my best certainly isn't good enough, but with Christ working through me, I can do all things. My best may not be great, but it's now acceptable because my sins are forgiven.

This Christmas season, as we celebrate the coming of the Christ-child, take a moment to reflect on why Jesus had to come in the first place, because our best wasn't good enough. But then rejoice in the fact that Jesus' best was! Now that's a real reason to shout *Merry Christmas!*

A graphic with a red background and rounded corners. At the top, it says "Ask... SEEK... knock..." in white and red text, with "Matthew 7:7, NV" below it. To the right is a silhouette of a person's head in profile, looking down. Below this, the text "District-Wide Prayer Weekend" is written in a large, white, cursive font. At the bottom, it says "Mark your calendar for January 27-29, 2012!" in a white, bold, sans-serif font.

“Ask...
SEEK...
knock.”
Matthew 7:7, NV

District-Wide
Prayer Weekend

Mark your calendar for
January 27-29, 2012!



RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

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