



# The Apple's Core

Keeping Christ at the Core of Our Hearts

## Joy in the Journey

By Deshua Joyce

As a fan of the musician Michael Card, I have often listened to his song *Joy in the Journey*. In fact, there are many times that I'd have to sing the song to remind myself of the truths. These are the times when life seems a little overwhelming (or a lot!) and I forget my joy somewhere along the journey.

Has that ever happened to you? We're nearing an important time of year when we can misplace our joy many places.....the mall, the post office, in traffic, at home, even at church as we think of our long "to do" list, all that we must accomplish before Christmas morning.

Two thousand years ago a couple was on their own journey. They had to leave Nazareth to travel to Bethlehem because of the census. The timing seemed wrong... after all, Mary was about to deliver their son. The most special birth ever was about to take place and they had to travel! The journey was not an easy one, but as I use my sanctified imagination...I like to think that Mary and Joseph were busy

imagining how their lives would be different once their baby was born. They may have shared their hopes for their baby, Jesus, and how His birth would lead them on another journey..... God's journey. They couldn't let the inconvenience of life, the troubles and hardships interfere with the plans of God. I think they chose to have joy in their journey.

Let's come back to the present...and check our own "Joy-meter." How are we doing? (I have to check myself every year... since I'm prone to overschedule, over plan, and overestimate my capabilities!) I think the most important thing we can do this year at Christmas is to keep Christ as our focus. **We may need to shorten our to-do list or make some more realistic plans to find the time to center on Christ.**

Over the years, I've heard many people tell me how they do that in their families. My friend's family eats by candlelight during Advent...something different to make this time special. If that seems too ambitious, try making one

night a week a special night to focus on Jesus. Years ago we had a special "What were they thinking?" night. This was a night I put a piece of the manger scene near each place setting. During dinnertime, each of us had an opportunity to give our impression of what each piece might have thought. Nothing was off limits; we used the star, the animals, the wisemen...every piece was used over the years... and we had great conversations.

Find time to develop your own family traditions. (Make sure these traditions add joy not frustration to your journey.) Christmas wouldn't be Christmas at our home if we didn't watch "It's a Wonderful Life" or drive around our neighborhood looking at lights. On Christmas morning we have a special coffee cake which is in honor of Jesus' birthday...candle and all.

As you look forward to the days leading up to Christmas, I trust you find joy in your Advent journey. Then you can truly enjoy Christ's birthday.

December 2007



Surrendered Steps

2007-2008  
Theme Verse:

Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, having been firmly rooted and now being built up in Him and established in your faith, just as you were instructed, and overflowing with gratitude.

Colossians 2:6-7

**ALL OF US AT  
E-MOMS ARE  
PRAYING THAT  
YOU HAVE A  
JOY-FILLED  
CHRISTMAS!**



## Holiday Traditions and Memories

### Twelve Days of Christmas...and More!



*Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor; not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord ...*

*Romans 12:10-11*

Three years ago this November, my husband, Chris, was called to travel to Iraq with an undetermined return date. Chris travels and deploys often, but I immediately realized he would be away for Thanksgiving, Christmas, and perhaps even Easter. The kids (15, 14, 11, and 2 at the time) were so strong when we broke the news, but we all felt a certain amount of indescribable sadness that one of us would be away throughout such a blessed season. Then the "magic" began.

One quiet night, about two weeks before Christmas, our doorbell rang. When we opened the door, no person was there, but instead a small package with a note explaining this was the first of numerous anonymous gifts we would receive up to Christmas day. It was so exciting, and we were all tremendously touched to know that someone was thinking of us in such a special way. The next day, we got another gift and the attached note explained that we would be receiving gifts for each of the twelve days of Christmas! Soon we came to understand that we were actually being simultaneously gifted by two different groups of people! We debated how to handle this situation. Should we post a sign for our secret gift-givers telling them we were "double dipping?" Should we try and catch them so we might explain the situation and allow them to choose another family? In the end, we decided to just enjoy the fabulous blessings that were being poured out on us. Each night we eagerly anticipated what we might find on our doorstep. We spent a lot of time speculating about who our Christmas elves might be. In an amazing way, these families provided just what we needed to make it through that Christmas. Months later when Chris returned, he shared with me how much these gifts for *us* had meant to *him*. His deployment was intense, but knowing that his family was being cared for by his brothers and sisters in Christ allowed him to focus on what he needed to do.

In our family, we consider Christmas 2004 particularly special as we witnessed, first hand, the body of Christ in action. As Christmas 2007 approaches, I encourage each of you to look around and see whom your family might touch with Christ's love. We certainly will.

From Melinda Bargery

### The Gift that Keeps on Giving

*...a family joke became a family tradition!*



I am the youngest of three daughters in my family. When I was about 8 or 9 years old, I remember sorting through all the presents under the tree, to see which ones were for me, counting how many I had coming to me, and trying to guess what was under all that pretty wrapping paper. As I was doing this, I suddenly came to the realization that my older sisters had several wrapped presents under the tree for me but I had nothing for them! Prior to this, Christmas was all about getting, getting, getting -- it hadn't occurred to me that I might think about giving! Since it was just the day before Christmas, and I hadn't had the foresight or concept of saving money or shopping for others, I looked around the house and my room for something I could give them. In a panic, I took a Coke float candle (popular in the early '70s) off my shelf and wrapped it up to give my teenaged sister. When she opened it on Christmas morning she seemed confused at first, then graciously but pointedly reminded me that she had given me that very candle the Christmas before! To add insult to injury, I had actually lit the candle once before so it had a burned wick! I was embarrassed and my sisters both got a big laugh out of my lame "re-gifting" efforts. The next year, my sister wrapped up that candle and gave it to my other sister as a joke. It was a family joke that became a family tradition when the next year, that sister re-wrapped it up and gave it back to me. Now each year, one of my sisters or I receive the Coke Float candle for Christmas. I am currently in possession of it and can't wait to wrap it up as the prettiest present to bestow on one of my sisters this Christmas. This "present" has been circulating in our family now for over thirty years!

From Pam O'Meara

*(Continued on page 3)*

## Resources

E-Moms is recommending [Peace is Here: Christmas Reflections](#), by Jars of Clay, as our Book of the Month for December. Let this book of thoughts and reflections on Advent help you to focus on the true meaning of Christmas!

Looking for other ways to keep Christ in the center of your Christmas? Try one of these great resources:

[Christ in Christmas: A Family Advent Celebration](#), by Dr. James Dobson, includes devotions, hymns and activities for the season.

[The Candle in the Forest: and Other Christmas Stories Children Love](#), edited by Joe Wheeler

[Remember the Reason](#), by David Cook is an Advent devotional that will help

you reflect on the meaning of Christmas.

[The ADVENTure of Christmas: Finding Jesus in our Holiday Traditions](#), by Lisa Whelchel will help you find Jesus in your holiday traditions.

[Christmas: Quiet Moments for the Season](#) is a collection scripture readings for the Advent season.



*Buy the Book of the Month at tonight's meeting at a **20% discount**, or in the Immanuel Christian Bookstore at the discounted price this month when you mention E-moms before you check out!*

## Getting to the Core

Children often seem to get the most joy out of Christmas, don't they? Not just the presents, but the wonder of it all—the faith and awe they have in God's great plan to bring salvation through a baby's birth! Jesus told His disciples, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these." (Mark 10:14) The disciples didn't want Jesus to be bothered by children, but He surprised

them by taking the children into His arms to bless them. Not only that, He presented them to the adults as an example to imitate!

One reason young children are a model of great faith is the simple fact that they live by faith daily. They must depend on and trust the adults around them, particularly their parents, to provide for them, to love them, and to look out for their needs every day. This is exactly the kind of faith the Lord wants us

to have in Him! Jesus wanted us to know that we should have a childlike faith—a complete and total trust in and dependence upon Him, not just for salvation, but for all our daily needs!

As you celebrate Christmas with your children this year, try to view God's gift of His son through their eyes—with childlike faith, joy and renewed dependence upon Him. What a perfect time to "imitate" your child!

*"It is good to be children sometimes, and never better than at Christmas, when its mighty Founder was a child himself."*

*Charles Dickens*

## Holiday Traditions and Memories (Continued from page 2)

### Cherishing a Sweet Memory

When I think of childhood Christmas memories, I think back to my earliest memory, which occurred when I was age 3. Santa brought me a yummy chocolate lollipop in my stocking. I remember savoring the delicious, sugary treat. Today, I do two traditions in honor of my own memory. I use Wilton candy molds and make holiday lollipops with my children. These are not nearly as chocolaty as my own memory! And then Santa brings my three a chocolate lollipop for their stocking. While none of my children know why I "do" this tradition, I know in my heart "why."



***Did you know...we are discontinuing the use of cassette tapes for recording our monthly speakers? Keep an eye out for CDs of our speakers, just \$4 each.***



## Keeping Christ at the Core of Our Hearts

E-Moms is a Ministry of  
Immanuel Bible Church  
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Springfield, VA 22151

Questions?  
703-941-4124 or  
e-moms@immanuelbible.net

*E-Moms is a ministry for mothers of Elementary-aged children. We aim to encourage, refresh, and inspire moms! You will get the opportunity to meet face to face and develop relationships with other moms in the same stage of life who are experiencing some of the same parenting joys and challenges as you. Our monthly meetings provide you with great food (all prepared for you), encouraging speakers (all relevant to you), and stimulating discussion (all geared toward you). Come join us!*

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CHECK US OUT ON THE WEB! YOU'LL FIND THE SCHEDULE OF SPEAKERS FOR THE YEAR, GREAT IDEAS FROM OTHER MOMS ON TOPICS YOU CAN RELATE TO, AS WELL AS E-MOMS RECIPES AND THE ELECTRONIC (PDF) VERSION OF THIS NEWSLETTER!

[WWW.IMMANUELBIBLE.NET/FAMILY/PARENTING/EMOMS.PHP](http://WWW.IMMANUELBIBLE.NET/FAMILY/PARENTING/EMOMS.PHP)

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## THE SOLE SOURCE

Looking for ideas on how you can encourage your child to do their best in homework, sports or getting ready for school? Why not try one of these suggestions from other E-Moms!

- Try to concentrate on taking "one small step at a time" and encourage your child with each positive change.
- Use role-playing as practice to help them feel ready to take on something new.
- Offer little rewards (think: Dollar Tree) for improvements and special projects.
- Cheer them on when they face a challenge whether or not they achieve the desired result. Praise their efforts not just results!

### 90 Minutes

The theme for the 2007–2008 90 Minutes season is "Dad's Toolbox". Our reference for the year is Chip Ingram's popular book, "Effective Parenting in a Defective World". Come join us on January 7th at 7pm in the Terrace Rooms for "Teaching Obedience". All fathers and grandfathers interested in being more purposeful in their parenting are invited to attend. Contact us:

ninetyminutes@verizon.net

### Mentor Moms

We are working on plans for a new way for you to get together with our Mentor Moms — be on the lookout for an invitation from E-Moms!

In the meanwhile, why not think of a question you think our experienced Mentor Moms might be able to help you with? Look for a Mentor Mom at the meeting, or place your question in our drop box, or email [emoms@immanuelbible.net](mailto:emoms@immanuelbible.net) and we'll get back to you!

### E-Moms

E-Moms will meet again on **January 28th from 7-9 pm in the Terrace Rooms**. Marty Crabtree will be speaking to us on "Stepping into the Unknown: Media Challenges". Come join us for an evening of refreshments, encouragement and fellowship!

*We love our children, but please remember that our meetings are for moms only.*

