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Agape Love Way Ministries

ADDRESSING THE SPIRITUAL GROWTH NEEDS OF THE MODERN CHRISTIAN, AND SECURING A FUTURE IN GODLY HOPE.

The True Meaning of Christmas

by Keith R. Thompson

For so many of us this is the time of year that is replete with goodies such as egg nogs, fruit cakes,



decorated trees & brightly-lit houses, and endless gift-giving and receiving. Yes, the smell of Christmas is in the air.

We go mall-hopping, plan our three or four-course Christmas dinners, and schedule our itinerary for when we go to our parents house, and when we spend time with the in-laws. It feels

like a mad-dash to get everything done before the 25th creeps upon us. It seems like there's not enough time in the day.

But after we've unwrapped all the gifts, and cleaned up after our Christmas meal, and returned those gifts we did not really like then what. What was the mad rush all about, and was it really worth it? What does Christmas truly meaning to us?

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A modern-day testimony of God at work

The Holy Scriptures instruct us to “count it all joy when we fall into numerous trials and sufferings” (NKJV). Yet when these major challenges come our way it is normal for us to ask questions such as “why do these bad things always seem to happen to me?”

That must have been the case on October 16, 2010 when a promising young College football player (who looked destined to play in the NFL) suffered a career-ending injury, one that almost cost him his life. His name is Eric LeGrand, and his testimony will move you to tears. Here is a young Christian who



was robbed of the chance to pursue his passion of playing the game he loves, lost the chance to earn million
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Editor's Note

Agape Love Way is a ministry devoted to the principles and practices of the First Century Church, and the Great Commandments of our Lord Jesus Christ, namely: Love the Lord with all your heart, mind, soul & strength, and Love your neighbor as yourself [Matt. 22:35-40; Mark 12:28-31; Luke 10:25-28].

§ Word of Wisdom Section §

The True Meaning of Christmas

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Despite the media assertion that for many people Christmas is primarily focused on the gifts under the tree, the candle lights in the windows, the cards in the mail, turkey & ham dinners with family and friends, stockings hanging in the living room, and images of that white, powdery substance coming down in the front yard the majority of Christians have a very different view of Christmas?

Christians and Christmas

In a recent survey of 1000 Americans, over 67% of them reported that they believe Christmas is more about Jesus Christ than about Santa Claus. These Americans consider Christmas more a day of religious significance than a day of bustling consumerism. Yet, despite these cherished beliefs the practice of many Christians do not always seem to align with these views. In fact, about 42% of self-described Christians believe in (and presumably encourage their kids to believe in) Santa Claus, compared with only 38% among non-Christians. In addition, only 28% read or tell their kids the Biblical Christmas story.

According to Scott McConnell, director of Life-Way Research "Americans

give Jesus a head nod at Christmas but spend most of the season pleasing their eyes, ears and taste buds with decorations, music and meals. Many celebrate Christmas the way most have celebrated Halloween — the fun traditions without sharing the religious significance."

Amidst these festivities, for many people, Christmas is also a time of sorrow because they don't have the extra money to buy presents for their children, family, and friends. Many too are saddened at Christmas-time when they think of their loved ones who will not be with them for various reasons. For them Christmas dinners may only be a wish and not a reality.

Then there are others who have no-one to share Christmas with. So many of our Christian brothers and sisters are either lonely or live alone and therefore have no-one to spend that special time of the year with. For them, Christmas is a very depressing time, and one that is anything but the most wonderful time of the year.

Yet Christmas is a season of great joy. It is a time of God showing His great love for us.

Christmas purpose
Christmas can be a time of healing and renewed strength. You see, Christmas is when we celebrate the birth of the Christ child. God sent His Son, Jesus, into the world to save mankind of our sins, and provide a pathway to Heaven. That path to spiritual restoration was achieved first through his birth, then through his death. As such we celebrate the birth of Christ at Christmas, and his death at Easter.

The reason why the birth of Christ is so significant is because of the special circumstances of his conception. Mary was conceived with the Christ-child without the aid of a man. This is the first time in recorded history that such an event occurred and signified that there was something special about the Christ-child Jesus.

Five types of Births

According to the Bible there are five different ways that GOD has

made mankind. We all know of the most common way which occurs when a man and a woman have a special intimate relationship. Some have called this process natural generation.

A second way GOD created mankind was to open old, dead wombs through a process theologians call regeneration. We see that he created Isaac by regenerating the womb of Sarah and the loins of Abraham, and John the Baptist was born after the reproductive organs of Elizabeth and Zachariah were regenerated.

Then there was Adam. GOD created him without the aid of either a man or a woman. HE was able to create a man from essentially nothing. After that GOD created someone without the aid of a woman. HE created Eve directly from Adam.

Finally, GOD created a man without the aid of another man.

§ Word of Wisdom Section §

True Meaning of Christmas Eric LeGrand story

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The immaculate conception of Mary led to the birth of the Christ-child Jesus. His birth brought great joy to the world. Shepherds, wise men, and angels all shared in the excitement of knowing about this great event. They knew this was no ordinary baby. They knew that JESUS was and is still GOD incarnate in human form. He was born for the purpose of saving mankind from eternal damnation.

JESUS was born so that one day the price could be paid for all the wrong things we have done. We are all born with a sinful nature. In addition, we all do things that do not always please God. The only way to remove that sin nature is through JESUS. He came so He could die on the cross for ALL of our sins. Those of us who believe that Jesus died for our sins can ask Him to come into our hearts and forgive us. Then, we are made clean and our old nature becomes renewed (spiritual regeneration). We can be assured that when this life is over we will live with JESUS for ever.

Reason for the season

Christmas (like Easter) therefore holds a very special place in the hearts of every true Christian. We know that

JESUS is GOD incarnate in human form. He was born for the purpose of saving mankind from eternal damnation.

MATTHEW 1:21 (ABRIDGED)

no matter what challenges may be going on in our lives and around us, we have the assurance that we are His children. We are the sons of God.

It is time for all of us believers to begin looking at Christmas in a new way.

If you have not yet accepted the Lord JESUS Christ as your personal savior then this is the time to do so. Acknowledge that the reason for his birth and death was to save you. This is the Christmas to invite Jesus into your heart.

If you are a believer then this is the time to renew your faith. Maybe you have found your belief in Christ slipping over the years, or maybe you have seen Christmas more for its commercial appeals lately than for its spiritual significance. Either way use this opportunity to restore your relationship with Christ. You will then have a truly "Merry Christmas."

Remember Jesus Is The Reason For The Season! Rejoice! §

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millions and have thousands more chant his name every Sunday. Yet through all of that travail he claims that the years since the injury have been the best years of his life.

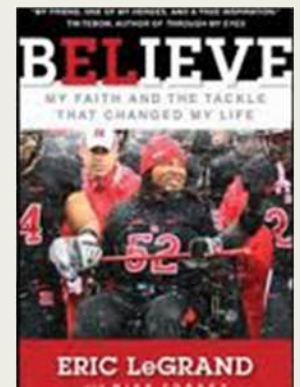
How did he get this way, and what really happened on that fateful day.

It all started on the afternoon of October 16, 2010 at Giants Stadium when his football team—the Rutgers University Scarlet Knights—played Army and during a defensive tackle got paralyzed from the neck down in a freak sports accident.

As a result of this injury Eric's life and dreams were shattered in an instant. He could no longer play football or any type of sports, could never walk again, or even feel sensation in his hands and feet. Eric cannot brush his own hair or teeth, or give himself a bath. But Eric has the most wonderful of gifts, knowing the

Lord Jesus Christ, and knowing that one day his faith will provide him with a glorified body in time.

Yet Eric's strength is not just in his faith in a better life in Heaven. Eric has seen how God has used his tragedy to influence others (esp. football players) to come to know God.



Eric has written a book chronicling his journey. I encourage every believer to purchase a copy and support this phenomenal young man. It is called "Believe: My faith and the tackle that changed my life"

Eric's faith propels him to continue to believe that he will one day walk again and we all share that belief with him. §

§ Personal Finance Section §

Credit Card Debt and Financial Woes

With so many Christians struggling with financial hardship we will take a look at many of the primary reasons for these challenges. The first of these is credit card debt.

Credit card debt is a major factor in consumer financial distress. Recent statistics show that the number of American cardholders relying on their "plastic" to pay daily expenses is at an all-time high, according to a study by the Federal Reserve.

Analysts say Americans are not only relying on credit cards to pay their bill – there are also more people living from paycheck to paycheck with absolutely no savings tucked away for the future.

Records show that credit cards not only have high interest rates, but they have extremely high back-end fees that are unrelated to costs, such as late fees and over-limit fees, plus a host of billing tricks and traps that function as hidden price points.

Read the following article to see how Christmas can be a trap-door for many people this time of year.

Lingering Christmas Bills Can Lead to Debt Woes

By Eileen Alt Powell

If you're still paying off Christmas debts [from past years], it's time to take a hard look at how you're using your credit cards.

You're not alone. Consumer counseling agencies see a 25 percent increase in the number of people seeking help in January and February, and most of that traffic is propelled to their doors by holiday bills that haunt consumers like the ghost of Christmas past.

"A lot of people get by, paying the minimums on their credit cards," said Durant Abernethy, president of the National Foundation for Credit Counseling. "Add on the holiday bills and all of a sudden, those minimums are more than they can afford."

You obviously can't go back and undo your Christmas spending. But you can learn from it.

Christmas Past

"People in trouble generally don't have a good idea of how much they

spend," said Abernethy, whose group is the umbrella for the nonprofit Consumer Credit Counseling Service agencies around the country.

He emphasizes the importance of budgeting and planning ahead, saying: "If you need to use a credit card to reach a goal, you should be able to pay it off in no more than 90 days — and, preferably, in 30 to 60 days."

Robert Manning, a senior research fellow at the University of Houston and author of "Credit Card Nation — The Consequences of America's Addiction to Credit," believes part of the problem is that the nation's ethic has changed.

"Our parents viewed debt as a shame and accumulating a nest egg as the right thing to do," Manning said. "The young see that as 'old school' and have been convinced that going into debt is fine."

Industry of Debt

The result, he said, is that

while 40 percent of credit card users pay their bills in full each month, the remaining 60 percent roll them over—and over and over. He calculates the average balance of these "revolvers" at more than \$11,500.

"The debt industry—and it is an industry—has persuaded people that their 'wants' are [now] 'needs' and that if you really care for someone, you'll spend more money on them," Manning said. "They tell you it's so easy, just use plastic. But they don't tell you how it will hurt, in mounting debt and higher interest rates and higher fees."

You can figure out just how much your Christmas debt is costing you to carry by using calculators on the Internet. Plug in \$1,000 at 17 percent (the prevailing credit card rate) in the calculator at www.bankrate.com, and you'll find that your interest totals \$94 over one year and \$187 over two.

Nancy Dunnan, author of "How to Invest \$50 to \$5,000," recommends that the way to begin getting a handle on credit card debt is

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Lingering Christmas Bills Can Lead to Debt Woes

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to make a list of all your unpaid balances along with the corresponding interest rate, then start paying down the card with the highest rate first."

If your problem is mainly holiday bills, "it shouldn't be difficult to figure out some ways to gather up a little extra cash" by eating out less, taking a lunch to work, doing without cappuccino for a while, even getting a weekend job, she said.

"And use this as a heads-up for next season," Dunning said. "Figure out what you spent last year and try to put aside some money each month so you'll accumulate that amount by next Christmas."

She adds: "If it's more than you can afford to set aside, then maybe you need to cut back on Christmas spending [in the future]. Certainly friends and relatives don't want you to go into debt for the holidays."

More About Agape Love Way Ministries

Agape Love Way is a non-profit organization established to promote charity care initiatives within a religious context, and according to the Holy Scriptures. It emphasizes the underlying precept of the Great Commandments of our Lord Jesus Christ, namely "Love the Lord with all your heart, mind, soul & strength, and Love your neighbor as yourself."

Agape Love Way engages in services that support the homeless and those in need of basic food sustenance. As such we aim to help individuals in all areas of accommodation needs, food aid, and basic social services, all the while promoting the Word and the work of the Lord. We also provide financial, organizational and administrative support to non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that are engaged in such services. To learn more about who we are and what we do send us an email at:

info@agapeloveway.org

Agape Love Way is led by its Executive Director, Keith Thompson, who is also a Professor of Business, Economics and Finance at a local NJ college. Professor Keith Thompson is a man anointed and inspired to teach the Word of God through Love. Email him at:

ExecDirector@agapeloveway.org

If you have an article or a recipe or even a testimony that you believe the Body of Christ will benefit from or be blessed by then submit it to us for consideration in this newsletter at: newsletter@agapeloveway.org

If you like something about this Christian newsletter, or even if you just have a comment to share then we look forward to hearing from you so email us at:

contact@agapeloveway.org

To help the Agape Love Way fulfill its mandate and support our various ministries please consider donating to the cause. We accept cash and in-kind donations such as food items, lightly-worn clothing and household appliances that are no longer needed. 100% of ALL donations will go to our various charities. To learn more about how to donate to us please send us an email at:

donations@agapeloveway.org

Help Agape Love Way Ministries support our various ministries, esp. at this time of year. We financially and directly support food banks, homeless centers, and other agencies that help the less fortunate.

Please consider sending a donation of \$10, \$20, \$30, \$50 or any other amount to us at our address below.

123 Main Street, Suite 2-72, Denville, NJ 07834

We are a tax-exempt organization

TIN 46-3772599.

All donations are tax deductible.



**Agape Love Way
Ministries**

123 Main Street, Suite 2-72
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Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me. Matthew 25:40