

Nothing material can compare to God’s gifts

In chapter Five of the book of Acts in the Bible, there is a story that all Christians should hold dear to their hearts and non-believers should ponder carefully. The disciples were out and about in the land, telling the good news about the savior Jesus Christ and his rise from the dead. The Jewish religious leadership, called the Sanhedrin, were very upset by what they considered to be heresy. The Sanhedrin convened a trial and dragged the disciples before them. The disciples refused to renounce Jesus and tried to convert the Sanhedrin. They were furious and wanted the disciples put to death. A wise Pharisee name Gamaliel, who was honored by all the people, intervened. “Men of Israel consider carefully what you intend to do to these men,” Gamaliel said, recounting the two prior false messiahs who came before Jesus. Their movements did not last. Gamaliel said: “Therefore, in the present case I advise you: Leave these men alone! Let them go! For if their purpose or activity is of human origin, it will fail. But if it is from God, you will not be able to stop these men; you will only find yourselves fighting against God.” The disciples were set free. Two thousand years later, there are 2.2 billion Christians in the world, a number that is

growing more rapidly than ever. Most Jews wanted a military savior who would defeat the Romans and free the land. Jesus didn’t fit their bill, so they refused him. Jesus did defeat the Romans and free the land and become King, just not in the manner and timeframe the Jews living at that time desired. So it will always be. God will achieve his purposes, but on God’s schedule, not our own. Recent polls are showing a significant decline in Americans who call themselves Christians, from 77 to 65 percent in just a decade. Polls can be manipulated, but any news such as this is disturbing, especially in the light of increasing suicides, drug use, depression and mental illness. When a person fails to understand how the world works and their place in the world, it creates a disconnect that can lead to all types of misery. Every human being is a precious creation of God. Failing to understand this basic fact sets the stage for an impossible life. Decades ago I was a social Christian and a secular humanist. Even so, I intellectually realized that man, society and culture desperately needed religion to function

properly. That – and the insistence of my new wife Ginny – got me going to church regularly. Sermon by sermon, Bible lesson by Bible lesson, the amazing power and truth of God and his word was revealed to me. The more I learned, the more my secular mind was blown, until I reached the moment of truth: If something in the Bible didn’t fit my world view, it was not because the Bible was wrong, but because my world view was wrong. I became a true believer. I cringe to think what a different course my life could have taken. Fresh out of UCLA business school with a degree in information systems, I was headed to the Silicon Valley to invent the internet. Instead, I eventually ended back in the family newspaper business in God’s country (struggling against the internet, how ironic!) As Jesus said, “What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul.” Who knows, I might have been a failure as a tech

entrepreneur, but even worse, I might have succeeded and become rich, arrogant, unsaved and mired in human sin with no hope for salvation. The thought makes me shudder. My young children are at an age when many of their contemporaries challenge their faith. Praise the Lord, so far, they have stood firm. My prayer for my children has remained consistent: That the Holy Spirit dwell in their hearts so they can serve the Lord and live happy and fulfilling lives. I tell them: If you see a turtle on a fencepost, would you believe the turtle got there by itself? You are the turtle. Or more simply, if there is no God, how in the world did you get here? There is a God. There is a magnificent plan, a huge drama, that is playing out over thousands of years. Every step along the way has been documented with breathtaking clarity. And it has all transpired just as the prophets so accurately predicted hundreds of years before it happened. All you have to do is go to church, listen and learn, read the Bible, pray for revelation and you will have it. Only then will you find what you are looking for. In the first quarter of my life, I remember that shiny red Honda 100 motorcycle under

the Christmas tree when I was 13. The joy I felt seemed like heaven on earth at the time. Now in the final quarter of my life, I think back on all my experiences, all the wonderful

people in my life and the beautiful gift of life God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit have given me, along with even greater joy yet to come. The motorcycle now pales in comparison.

Guest Column
By **Wyatt Emmerich**
Publisher of Jackson’s Northside Sun



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►Stockings

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coins through a window (or down the chimney, depending on which version of the story you read or hear), and they were captured in the girls’ stockings hanging to dry by the fire. The family was overjoyed to have received such riches. Soon news traveled about the mysterious money in stockings, and other children left

out stockings for St. Nicholas to capture their own gifts. The tradition has transformed over the years, and now many children hang stockings by the chimney with the expectation that the stockings will be filled with gifts from Santa. Traditions once suggested that only gifts from Santa were left in stockings, while gifts placed beneath the tree were

from family, but that has since changed. Stockings are now meant to hold small gifts while larger items are placed under the tree. Stockings should be hung away from the flames of the fire as a safety precaution. Some children even like to hang individual stockings on their bedposts instead of on a fireplace mantle.

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