

# IN OTHER WORDS...

A RESEARCH SERVICE OF FACTS & HUMOR FOR CHRISTIAN LEADERS

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**DETAILS:** Since 1955, children have been able to call the North American Aerospace Defense Command - NORAD (previously Continental Air Defense Command - CONAD) on Christmas Eve to track the whereabouts of Santa or ask other curious questions. Personnel at Peterson Air Force Base in Colorado, along with 1,200+ volunteers field over 100,000 calls, receive more than 11,000 emails, and get no less than a million Facebook "likes." It all started with a simple typo for a 1955 Sears ad in a Colorado newspaper. Kids were directed to call Santa at the misprinted phone number, which was CONAD. That one small mistake spawned a tradition spanning more than six decades. Some grow weary of the Santa intrusion on Christmas, which easily and often gets out of hand, but we can learn a lot about the heart of a child through avenues like this. In 2012, a little boy from Missouri called with a pressing question: "When would Santa deliver toys to heaven?" His mother explained that the little boy's younger sister died that year and he was concerned about her first Christmas after dying. *Beaumont Enterprise*, 12/25/11, p.15A; 12/25/12, p.6B; *Reader's Digest*, July 2014, p.82

**JESUS:** Walker Moore wrote about a Christmas experience that happened with his family years ago. They were visiting his wife's parents and accompanied them to the Christmas program at the small church they attended. Knowing that their grandson sang in the Christmas pageant at the big city church, Moore's in-laws insisted upon him being spontaneously inserted into the program. The young boy dutifully obeyed. His voice sounded great, but his memory got a little fuzzy as he belted out "O, Come, All Ye Faithful." Going blank on the chorus, he sang, "O come let us *ignore* him," and then repeated it, leaving no doubt about what he said. It made for a very memorable Christmas program and offered some serious insight. For far too many, and far too often, Christmas is a time when we ignore the Lord rather than adore Him. *The Baptist Messenger*, 12/4/8

**SILENT NIGHT:** December 24, 2018 marks the 200th anniversary of *Silent Night*. It's the most recorded song in history and there are over 137,315 versions of this song in no less than 300 languages. Such outcomes might suggest a glamorous back-story, but the author never knew glamour or fame. Joseph Mohr was born out of wedlock just a few weeks before Christmas in Salzburg, Germany during 1792. He was instantly and continuously stigmatized because of his birth. Mohr's father abandoned him and he was taken in by Salzburg's last executioner. He grew up with three additional out of wedlock siblings in the damp, cold, bleak executioner's home, which resulted in a lung disease. He amazingly completed school and was accepted to seminary but required special permission because of his birth. Mohr became a coadjutor, or assistant, to the priest and served in his father's hometown before requiring a move to Salzburg due to his health. On that famed Christmas Eve in 1818, Mohr was pressed to improvise due to the broken organ, which was due to wear and age rather than the mythological chewing of mice. He pulled out a poem he'd written two years before and suddenly saw a provision. He walked through heavy snow to the home of his friend Franz Gruber and challenged him to create music for the poem that could be played on guitar. Later that night, at the St. Nikola Church in Salzburg, *Silent Night* was sung for the first time. A month later, Karl Mauracher traveled from Ziller Valley to repair the organ. He played the song to test the instrument and asked for permission to share it with others, which he did. Over time it

gained popularity, but not during Mohr's lifetime. Joseph Mohr died from his childhood lung problems on December 4, 1848, thirty years after the debut of *Silent Night*. He was dubbed "Priest of the Poor" because of his care for those in poverty. One of the greatest needs we have is that of experiencing purpose in life - and for Christians, to know that our life mattered for the Kingdom of God. Joseph Mohr was a sickly, out-of-wedlock boy, who was raised by a man that executed people for a living. He was stigmatized as a child, faced adversity his whole life, possessed little more than his guitar, and died as poor as when he was born. If God can leverage that resume for glory to Himself, none of us are outside His purview for bringing Him glory. *Stories Behind The Best-Loved Songs of Christmas, Ace Collins, 2001, p.152; USA Today, 12/19/17, p.D1; StillenNacht.com*

**TRUTH:** Dictionary.com chose "Misinformation" as the word of the year for 2018. Jane Solomon, linguist-in-residence at Dictionary, said, "The rampant spread of misinformation is really providing new challenges for navigating life in 2018." Looking back over the increased prevalence of misinformation this year, she stated, "our relationship with truth is something that came up again and again." Cultural confusion pales in comparison with misinformation about eternal truth. The former leads to societal chaos, but the latter leads to spiritual death. Concerning misinformation about Christ, John MacArthur wisely wrote, "Some say He was only a myth, but myths don't set the calendar for history." *Beaumont Enterprise, 11/27/18, p.A2; God With Us, John MacArthur, 1989, p.83*

### **EVERYDAY HUMOR**

**CHRISTMAS:** Our daughter surprised us with a visit just three weeks before Christmas and that meant a few extra days with our two granddaughters. Norah is 20-months old, full of energy, and quite verbal. She's learned to shout "AMEN!" at the end of prayers, but depends on the cue "in Jesus' name" for her loud exclamation. I was with her at the breakfast table and she was ready to eat even though the rest of the family hadn't come to the kitchen yet, so I told her we needed to pray. I started the prayer with "Jesus" as I planned to thank Him for our food. As soon as I said "Jesus" she shouted "AMEN!" The prayer was over as quickly as it began, which obviously made me laugh. But it reminded me that Jesus is all we need - everything else is secondary. *Editor's Personal Experience*

**CHRISTMAS BONUS:** A bank in Houston, Texas gave out early gifts to unsuspecting customers on November 25, 2018. A Bank of America ATM accidentally gave out \$100 bills instead of \$10s near the intersection of FM 1960 and Interstate 45. Word quickly spread and a line of vehicles & pedestrians ensued until deputies finally stopped the train of profiteers around 10:30 p.m. Turns out a vendor carelessly loaded \$100 bills in the \$10 slot so no arrests were made. Standard policy is to demand repayment of any extra funds withdrawn by a customer, but the bank uncharacteristically stated, "Customers will be able to keep the additional money dispensed." *Houston Chronicle, 11/27/18, p.B1*

**CHRISTMAS SHOPPING:** Comedian Conan Obrien tweeted, "Got all my Christmas shopping done. Now to shop for other people." *Reader's Digest, December 2016, p.91*

**HOLIDAY STRESS:** Scarlett Buzek witnessed holiday stress at her California Post Office. The line was out the door and only one employee was at the counter so stress was running high. A frustrated customer yelled at the clerk, "How can I help you go faster?" The stressed postal worker replied, "Go home!" *Reader's Digest, December 2016, p.36*

**IN OTHER WORDS...** began in 1991 and is produced by Dr. Raymond McHenry, Senior Pastor of the Westgate Memorial Baptist Church in Beaumont, Texas. Subscribers receive full access to our Web site of over 5,000 illustrations PLUS two email issues per month filled with fascinating facts, quotes, humor, and spiritual illustrations from headline news. All content is copyrighted. Visit [www.iows.net](http://www.iows.net) to start a new subscription or send inquiries to:  
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