

In Other Words...

A RESEARCH SERVICE FOR CHRISTIAN COMMUNICATORS

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CHRISTMAS: During the Christmas season of 2024, a figurine of Jesus was stolen from a public display in downtown Fort Collins, Colorado. A week later, the anonymous thief returned the confiscated nativity statuette to a local fire station...just in time for Christmas. The accompanying note explained, "I'm really sorry. I made a dumb mistake in the moment. It won't happen again." We probably won't hijack a baby Jesus from an outdoor nativity, but it is possible for us to make a dumb mistake about Christ at Christmas...so don't. *Beaumont Enterprise, 12/21/2024, p.A2*

CHRISTMAS GIFTS: American children own 40% of the world's toys, yet they make up just 3% of the global child population. McDonald's is the largest toy distributor in the world via their Happy Meals. *Turning Points, November 2025, p.13; Saturday Evening Post, Nov/Dec 2022, p.26*

GENEROSITY: Jeannie Tarkenton's roommate was facing a financial crisis during their sophomore year at Princeton. MacKenzie would have to drop out during the 1989-1990 school year if she couldn't come up with \$1,000. With no other options, Tarkenton convinced her dad to loan her roommate the \$1,000. Today, that once cash-strapped sophomore is one of the most influential philanthropists in the world. The former wife of Amazon's Jeff Bezos, MacKenzie Scott, is worth about \$34 billion and she has donated more than \$19 billion dollars to various causes. Scott shames the more wealthy by actually giving away her money rather than just making public commitments to do so in the future, and she attributes that act of kindness nearly four decades ago as a catalyst for her philanthropy today. Generosity is often contagious. *Houston Chronicle, 11/27/2025, p.B11*

JESUS: Dave Stone is the former pastor of Southeast Christian Church in Louisville, Kentucky. The current pastor, Kyle Idleman, has Stone preach several times each year and he recently made this powerful contrast. "Satan knows you by your name but calls you by your sin. Jesus knows your sin but calls you by your name." *Whatever You Do, Southeast Christian Church, 10/12/2025*

JESUS: During a Christmas pageant in the Bethel Union Church of Duarte, California, Audrey Mieir was overwhelmed by what she experienced. Christmas was on Sunday in 1955 and that small church presented the story of Christ's birth through their youth acting out the parts. It was a simple, powerful time of worship punctuated by the pastor declaring from Isaiah 9:6, "His name shall be called Wonderful." After Dr. Luther Mieir said those words, his sister-in-law's mind took flight. The flyleaf of her Bible became an artist's canvas and she wrote out words and music to a simple chorus: *His Name Is Wonderful*. She taught it to the youth group and it was sung publicly for the first time during their evening service. The song is not typically connected to Christmas but it was created and sung on Christmas Day 70 years ago this year and it's been sung around the world ever since in many languages. *Handbook To The Baptist Hymnal, Jere Adams, 1992, p.139*

MONEY: The National Retail Federation has predicted this will be the first time Americans spend \$1 trillion during the holiday season. Consumers anticipate spending \$890 per person on average. Dr. James Dobson founded *Focus on the Family* in 1977 and recently passed away on August 21, 2025 at the age of 89. In one of his classic books, he opened with a story about a family night of playing Monopoly. His competitive nature got the best of him and he trounced his wife and daughter like a wolf on Wall Street. They were not pleased with his behavior so they hurried off to bed, leaving him to put up the game. He had felt such power while they were circling the board, but now he felt empty and alone. His energy dissipated as he sorted the money and realized it all

goes “back in the box.” His “fortune” was over and he quickly drew the comparison to life. No matter how much, or little, we amass in this life...it will all go back in the box so handle it all with godly discernment. *USA Today*, 11/27/2025, p.NN3; *Straight Talk*, James Dobson, 1991, p.14

PEACE: Militarization is sweeping the educational system for Russian students as the war against Ukraine continues. During the fall of 2024, a TV anchor close to Putin made a telling statement to a gathering of young adults in Moscow. Vladimir Solovyov said, “A man is created not for peace, but for war, and Russians—for victory.” Isaiah 9:6 described Jesus as the Prince of Peace and Christmas reminds us that He came for that purpose. *Wall Street Journal*, 11/14/25, p.A7

PERFECTION: Dating back to 1937, the Charles W. Howard Santa Claus School in Midland, Michigan has been teaching men how to correctly portray St. Nick. It’s serious business as only about half of the applicants are accepted each year. Among the many directives, would-be-Santas are instructed to memorize *Rudolph The Red-Nosed Reindeer* so they can sing the song and know the names of his flying companions. They must bone-up on Santa lore and be prepared for kids’ tough questions. “Ho-ho-ho” requires refinement to a comforting soft laugh so as to sooth rather than frighten. Attire must be impeccable and hygiene can’t be anything less than inviting. Then to sum up all that’s expected, the school’s dean, Tom Valent, stated, “You have to be perfect.” Christmas is a reminder that the Lord came because none of us can measure up to God’s standard. Even Santa himself, at his very best, falls far short of God’s perfection. *Parade.com*, 12/22/2013

REDEMPTION: In 1999, Judge Tom DuBois began a tradition of letting minor traffic violators sing Christmas songs on the last day of court before Christmas to erase blemishes on their driving record. In Columbia, a suburb of Nashville, Tennessee, charges were dismissed with a song and five canned goods donated to charity. Clifford Jones sang about Rudolph and noted, “I’m a little shy, but not about saving a dollar. It was a pretty good Christmas present.” After *Jingle Bells*, Donald Hatler said it was “a little embarrassing. I don’t have the best singing voice in the world, but it was worth it.” More serious infractions involving child safety were not so easily dismissed. True Christmas carols teach that our sin requires more than a song. *News.BBC.co.uk*, 12/24/2002

SELF: The Hasbro Selfie Series debuted in 2022 and was discontinued just a year later. Buyers had the opportunity to create a 6-inch action figure with their face on it. You could be Spider-Man, Iron Man, Black Panther, a Power Ranger, a Ghostbuster, Princess Leia, the Mandalorian or a Star Wars stormtrooper. The 3D personalized reproductions sold for \$60 but didn’t even make it to a second Christmas. Putting self at the center always has a shelf-life. *The Week*, 2/24/23, p.28

EVERYDAY HUMOR

CHRISTMAS GIFTS: It was Christmas Eve in the mall and Lance was flagging on his wife’s gift. In desperation he looked at the directory for stores he might have overlooked and it read, “You are here and still have no idea what to buy her.” *Saturday Evening Post*, Nov/Dec 2022, p.18

CHRISTMAS GIFTS: Anna gave her neighbor a wrapped package for Christmas with this note: “I got this for you so you can stop borrowing mine.” *Mature Living*, December 2025, p.47

SECRET SANTA: Someone got fired right before Christmas and a dispassionate co-worker asked the boss how that would affect their office’s Secret Santa. *Reader’s Digest*, December 2020, p.32

STRESS: After he read about the shepherds watching their flocks by night, Pastor Ed added, “And some of you are watching your stocks by night.” *Because of Bethlehem*, Max Lucado, 2016, p.7

WORRY: Comic strip character Ziggy offered some good holiday advice: “Leave your worries on your doorstep and hopefully porch pirates will take ‘em!” *Houston Chronicle*, 11/24/25, p.A12

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