

# In Other Words...

A RESEARCH SERVICE OF FACTS & HUMOR FOR CHRISTIAN LEADERS

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**ANXIETY:** December of 2024 began with a front-page story in the Wall Street Journal noting that Bible sales are up 22% this year due to rising anxiety and new marketing. Other book sales were up less than 1% during the same period. Jeff Crosby, president of the Evangelical Christian Publishers said, “People are experiencing anxiety themselves, or they’re worried for their children and grandchildren.” Bethany Martin, manager of the Faith & Life Bookstore in Newton, Kansas, noted she’s seeing a lot of first-time Bible buyers. She said, “They’re looking for hope with the world the way it is, and the Bible is what they’re reaching for.” The *God Bless The USA Bible*, endorsed by Donald Trump in March, was not included in these numbers of rising sales. Marketing strategies to address this growing anxiety have no doubt played a part, but the fact that Bible sales are up 21% higher than all other printed books is telling. *Wall Street Journal*, 12/2/24, p.A1 & B1

**AUTHENTICITY:** Coca-Cola sparked a controversy with its 2024 holiday ads because portions of these commercials were generated by artificial intelligence. In years past, it took a full year to produce the Christmas campaign, but this year AI truncated that to just two months. The tsunami of AI is upon us and it certainly saves time, but the outcry has been that Coke branded itself as “the real thing” but now it’s not. Even in the banality of marketing, people want authenticity and nothing is more real than Christ and His atoning work. *Beaumont Enterprise*, 11/24/24, p.A10

**CHRISTMAS:** The best-man in our wedding, Peter Celum, was raised in Linden, California and I visited his hometown in 1981. It’s a tiny place with no stoplights and about 1,800 residents. Most people have never heard of this community 90 minutes east of San Francisco...but you’ve no doubt heard about a man who came from Linden. Aaron Judge was a 3-sport sensation for the Linden Lions and is now the New York Yankees’ captain. Most recently, Judge was the unanimous choice for MVP in the American League – his second MVP thus far. When we think of Bethlehem 2,000 years ago with its population of 300...it was a lot like Linden. *USA Today*, 11/25/24, p.6C

**CHRISTMAS:** Glen Scrivener provides wise tension for those who reject the virgin birth of Jesus but find no problem believing creation took place without God. He states, “Christians believe in the virgin birth of Jesus. Atheists believe in the virgin birth of the universe. Choose your miracle.” Calvin Miller (1936-2012) offered a complementary quote on this topic by author Madeleine L’Engle (1918-2007). She stated, “The virgin birth...is far less mind-boggling than the Power of all Creation stooping so low as to become one of us.” Miller paraphrased it this way: “The virgin birth is nothing compared to incarnation.” The latter is truly a far greater miracle. *A Million Little Miracles*, Mark Batterson, 2024, p.105; *The Book of Jesus*, Calvin Miller, 1996, p.136

**CHRISTMAS:** In January of 2024, the Television Academy released their list of the “75 Most Impactful Television Moments.” They culled through 8 decades of TV history and chose Apollo 11’s 1969 moon landing as number 1. Coverage of 9/11 was second place. The Beatles’ 1964 appearance on The Ed Sullivan Show came in third, and MLK’s I Have A Dream speech was 6th. In this list of television’s biggest moments, 14th place was Linus reading the Christmas story from Luke in the 1965 classic *A Charlie Brown Christmas*. It’s monumental that Hollywood gave such prominent ranking to Christ, Scripture & Christmas in 2024. *Beaumont Enterprise*, 1/13/24, p.B7

**CHRISTMAS:** Louis Pasteur (1822-1895) pioneered immunology during a time when thousands died of rabies each year. After years of work on a vaccine, he was about to experiment on himself when a 9-year-old boy was bitten by a rabid dog. The boy’s mother pleaded for Pasteur to try his

medicine on her son. For 10 days young Joseph Meister was injected by Pasteur and he lived. The French chemist/pharmacist would continue making life-changing discoveries, but decades later he requested that three simple words be etched on his headstone: Joseph Meister Lived. Jesus came to earth so that we could go to heaven...He died so we can live. *Christian Reader*, 11/98, p.27

**GENEROSITY:** Prior to his transformation, Ebenezer Scrooge was miserly & miserable. Yet in Dickens' concluding lines of *A Christmas Carol*, the famed author wrote this about Scrooge's new disposition: "It was always said of him, that he knew how to keep Christmas well." Generosity is essential to keeping Christmas well. *A Christmas Carol*, Charles Dickens, 1922, p.166

**GOSPEL:** Holiday scams are pervasive and Americans will lose over \$10 billion this year in fraudulent schemes. Major newspapers have carried large articles about protecting yourself from common scams. Typical safeguards include watching out for fake charities, double-checking websites since deceptive links can be just a few characters different than the real one, don't answer unsolicited emails or texts, and be skeptical of product reviews & testimonials. The most repeated warning is the one we all know well...*if a deal seems too good to be true, it probably is*. For that very reason many people think the Gospel is a scam, but what Jesus did through His incarnation isn't too good to be true...it's just so good because it's so true. *USA Today*, 11/25/24, p.B1

**GRACE:** Scriptures clearly state we are saved by grace, but we're not automatically saved...we must respond to God's grace. Three of the most familiar Christmas words are, "Batteries not included." If we want something to work, we must respond with what is required. Jesus provided everything we need for salvation, now we must decide if we'll respond. *Editor's Perspective*

**JESUS:** Fathers can get confused at weddings and Neil Crossley demonstrated that this past fall. The 60-year-old dad moved quickly down the aisle in Yorkshire, England and arrived at the altar...without his daughter. He was redirected back to the bride and then escorted her down the aisle. The congregation all had a good laugh and his daughter Amy later said, "It was a special moment none of us will forget." Just as a bride is the center of attention at a wedding, Jesus should be our primary focus during Christmas – don't walk in without Him. *Examiner*, 11/28/24, p.22B

**SALVATION:** On October 30, 2024, Netflix released a documentary about Martha Stewart in which she acknowledged an affair early in her 29-year marriage to Andrew Stewart. She added, "But I don't think Andy ever knew about that." The couple was married from 1961 to 1990 and both spouses were unfaithful. What's more telling than this disclosure is the belief that if it went unnoticed then it's okay. Sin of any kind doesn't escape God's notice and that's why Jesus came (1 John 3:5). Even His name declares that (Matthew 1:21). *Beaumont Enterprise*, 10/12/24, p.B7

## EVERYDAY HUMOR

**CHARACTER:** Ed Thompson noted, "You can tell a lot about a person by the way they handle three things: a rainy day, lost luggage, and tangled Christmas lights." *Reader's Digest*, 2/3, p.123

**CHRISTMAS GIVING:** When tempted to spend more than you should, heed this advice: Don't keep up with the Joneses, drag them down to your level. It's cheaper. *Reader's Digest*, 12/24, p.42

**CHRISTMAS SPIRIT:** Dan said he buys his young nephew a gift that requires assembly because "watching my brother struggle to put it together is MY Christmas." *Reader's Digest*, 12/24, p.14

**ETERNAL LIFE:** Jo Ann Kimball's town celebrated their centennial by erecting an eternal flame. The company's warranty stated, "Our eternal flames are fully guaranteed for three years." Jesus came to provide us with God's extended warranty. *Reader's Digest*, November 2006, p.167

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