



# The G.E.M.

Edition 12

The Grace Electronic Magazine

December 2007

## FOCUS ON ISRAEL

Can you believe it, schools have closed and it is almost Christmas already.

Thank you to all who have supported us over this last year. It has been a good year of growth and we trust God that 2008 will be even better.

In this month's edition of *The G.E.M.* we zoom in on a little town called Bethlehem, with a couple of articles highlighting the more important aspect of Christmas, namely Christ and our relationship with him.

We have included another *Word Soduko* on page 2, along with our next country in the *Missions Spotlight*, and a poem focussing on the true spirit of Christmas. On the same page you will find the next book in our *Top 25 Must Reads* of all time – this time a true classic.

We have a great Christmas story on page 3 that will be sure to pull on your heartstrings.

Finally, if you are looking for something to keep you and your family entertained while away this Christmas, check out our promotional items on page 4. And for those of you planning your small group programmes for 2008, on the same page there is a small sampling of resources we are able to source for you.



Until next time,  
God bless.✝

## In This Issue

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <i>Focus on Israel</i> .....                   | 1 |
| <i>To Us a Child is Born</i> .....             | 1 |
| <i>Diary of Events</i> .....                   | 1 |
| <i>Missions Spotlight</i> .....                | 2 |
| <i>Christmas Forever More</i> .....            | 2 |
| <i>When the Magi Camped in Bethlehem</i> ..... | 3 |
| <i>On Promotion</i> .....                      | 4 |

## TO US A CHILD IS BORN

I love Christmas. The music, lights, decorations, sunny skies, shopping for gifts for loved ones. I remember what it was like to be a child at Christmas, with all its “magic” and without all the hassles, concerns and responsibilities that go along with being an adult at this hectic time of year.

It seems harder every year to find the real meaning of Christmas. It is different for everyone... I mean Christ is the central figure of Christmas, but what does the celebration of his birth mean to you? Is it the sacrifice he made for us, or is it the life he gives us that makes Christmas special? Is it the miraculous way he came into this world or the reason he came into this world that brings significance to the season for you?

Christmas means many different things to everyone, but for many it has become a day just like any other. Sure, we go through the motions; opening our gifts, being with family and friends, going to church services, but the excitement is gone. And what is worse is the memory that this used to be such a special day.

As with everything else in the Christian life, it is not about the ritual or tradition, but our relationship with him now, today, right this minute. It is about walking with him daily, turning

to him in every situation, trusting him with all our cares and burdens and concerns. It is about making him the priority in our lives, day by day, moment by moment.

Our relationship with God is more important than anything. More important than family, friends or work. Many of us are so overwhelmed trying to take care of our families, homes, and other responsibilities that we have neglected our relationship with the Lord. How do we spend time daily with him (who we cannot see) when we cannot seem to take care of those we can see?

Christmas is a time to put things in perspective, to straighten out our priorities, and to focus our time and energy on drawing closer to God. Nothing is more important. In fact, it is so important that he gave his only Son over to death on a cross so that we would be able to draw close to him.

I challenge and encourage you in the midst of the hustle and bustle of this holiday season, to take a quiet moment to ask God what is most important to you this Christmas season. I guarantee you if you ask him with all your heart, he will answer you. For as he says in his Word, “*You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart*” (Jeremiah 29:13).✝

*Merry Christmas from Grace Media*

## DIARY OF EVENTS

BE SURE TO DIARISE THE FOLLOWING EXCITING EVENTS

### Just Jesus Session

28December – 1 January in the KwaZulu Natal Midlands  
For more information visit: [www.justjesus.co.za/jjs/home](http://www.justjesus.co.za/jjs/home)

### Mighty Men's Conference

22-23 February 2008 at Rivers Church, Sandton  
For more information visit: [www.riverschurch.co.za](http://www.riverschurch.co.za)

### Daniel Conference with Angus Buchan

14-16 March 2008 at NG Gemeente, Moreleta  
For more information visit: [www.moreleta.org](http://www.moreleta.org)

### Mighty Men 2008 Conference

18-20 April 2008 at Shalom Farm, Greytown  
For more information visit: [www.shalomtrust.co.za](http://www.shalomtrust.co.za)

## MISSIONS SPOTLIGHT

### State of Israel

(מְדִינַת יִשְׂרָאֵל - Medīnat Yisrā'el)

**Capital:**  
Jerusalem

**Official Languages:**  
Hebrew and Arabic

**Largest City:**  
Jerusalem

**Currency:**  
New Israeli Sheqel

**Population:**  
7 184 000

**Government:**  
Parliamentary  
Democracy



Israel is located at the eastern end of the Mediterranean Sea, bounded by Lebanon to the north, Syria and Jordan to the east, and Egypt to the south west. The total area under Israeli control, including the military-controlled and Palestinian-governed territory of the West Bank, is 27,799 square kilometres.

Just over three quarters of the population are Jews from a diversity of Jewish backgrounds. Approximately sixty-eight percent of Israeli Jews are Israeli-born, twenty-two percent are immigrants from Europe and the Americas, and ten percent are immigrants from Asia and Africa (including the Arab world).

Making up 16.2% of the population, Muslims constitute Israel's largest religious minority. Israeli Arabs, who comprise 19.8% of the population, contribute significantly to that figure as over four fifths of them are Muslim. Of the remaining Israeli Arabs, 8.8% are Christian and 8.4% are Druze. Members of many other religious groups, including Buddhists and Hindus, maintain a presence in Israel, albeit in small numbers.

The city of Jerusalem enjoys a special place in the hearts of Jews, Muslims, and Christians as the home of sites that are pivotal to their religious beliefs, such as the Western Wall, the Temple Mount, the Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

### Missionary Organisation to Israel:

#### Christian Friends of Israel

Website: [www.cfijerusalem.org](http://www.cfijerusalem.org)

## CHRISTMAS FOREVER MORE

The bells are chiming, and carollers singing,  
And all I can do is sit here thinking,  
Of that Christmas, two thousand years ago  
Of what happened, and why it was so.

What happened to cause this special day?  
And why do we still celebrate it today?  
Who were the shepherds, and the wise men?  
Why have a day to remember them?

But they are not the ones we focus on,  
But on the one who was born God's Son,  
This is the day of the Saviour's birth,  
So let us rejoice all the earth.

But wait a minute, and listen to me,  
That's not the only reason for some festivity,  
It's not only what happened on that one day,  
But it is what He did then for us to this day.

He died on a cross to set the captives free,  
He died there so that the blind can see,  
But He also died for the kings and thieves,  
And for all of those who in Him believe.

See this is not a time just of Santa and bells,  
Or a time of snow, parties and wishing wells,  
But it is a time when we worship the Messiah,  
And to forget that log burning in the fire.

So don't worry about the gifts you will get,  
Or on what tree or decorations to get,  
But focus on the One that this day is for,  
The one who gave the gift that lasts forever more.

Glyn Williams  
© Copy(right) 1994

## WORD SUDOKU

This puzzle works in the same manner as normal Sudoku, except that the numbers have been replaced with letters.

When complete, revealed in the shaded area will be a drama related word that is often repeated in the Sermon on the Mount. Answer in next month's issue.

### Last Month's Solution

|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| S | N | E | A | C | M | T | F | R |
| M | F | T | R | N | E | S | C | A |
| R | A | C | S | F | T | E | N | M |
| E | S | N | M | A | C | R | T | F |
| C | R | A | F | T | S | M | E | N |
| T | M | F | E | R | N | A | S | C |
| N | T | M | C | E | R | F | A | S |
| F | C | S | T | M | A | N | R | E |
| A | E | R | N | S | F | C | M | T |

### Letters Used:

C E H I O P R T Y

|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|   | I |   |   | Y | O | E | H |   |
|   |   | H |   |   | P |   | I | T |
| E |   | Y |   |   |   | C |   |   |
| I |   | E | Y |   | T | H |   | R |
|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| C |   | R |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| R |   | O | I |   |   | P |   |   |
| P | C |   | E | R |   | T |   |   |
| Y |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |

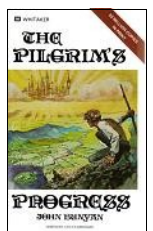
## Top 25 Must Reads

### THE PILGRIM'S PROGRESS

by John Bunyan

*The Pilgrim's Progress* has inspired readers for over three centuries. It is one of the best-loved and most widely read books in English literature and is a classic of the heroic Puritan tradition and a founding text in the development of the English novel.

Bunyan's own experience of religious persecution informs his story, and its qualities of psychological realism, and the beauty and simplicity of his prose combine to create a book of beauty and simplicity whose appeal is universal.



**Original English: R80**  
**Modern English: R120**

**Audio Cassettes: R250**  
**Audio CD's: R350**

## When the Magi Camped in Bethlehem

"Could I rent that little house in the back for my family?" Joseph inquired at our door. "We have just moved to Bethlehem from Nazareth."

"And how do you plan to pay for it," my husband Jacob retorted. He did not trust outsiders. If we had just known who they were, we would have given it to them. But no one knew. Not then.

Joseph held out his hands. Strong, big hands, calloused from hard labour. "I can work for you. Help with the livestock, harvest in the summer, whatever you need," he said. His eyes were pleading. "I... we just had a little baby last week...."

"Oh, was that your baby born in the stable behind the inn?" said Jacob.

"You know about it?" Joseph was amazed, but continued, "When I can get some carpenter jobs I can pay you."

I could see Jacob weakening. He looked at me, and I smiled. "Yeah, you can take it," he said gruffly. "But I expect to see you first thing in the morning. We have wood to cut in the hills."

They moved in that afternoon, and Mary and I became fast friends. She reminded me of my own daughter.

Two years later about midnight, a caravan lumbered into Bethlehem and stopped right in front of our house. Camels were kneeling, and their riders climbed down from their mounts. Easterners, they were, and rich. There were three of them, rich ones I mean, you do not count servants, I am told.

They were looking beyond us to the little house where Mary, Joseph and Jesus lived. It was bathed in a gentle, ethereal light. I looked up and saw the star, I guess that was what it was, shedding its clear light on the house. The rich men did not seem afraid. They moved toward the little house, with

their retinue of servants behind.

Through the open door we could see them kneeling on the dirt floor before the sleeping Jesus. "We saw the child's star in the East. We knew that it meant a great king had been born among the Jews, greater than any on earth," one was saying. "We came to do homage to such a great king."

Jesus, a king? How could it be? The family was so poor, Joseph just a farmer-carpenter, Mary a peasant girl.

I could see tears flowing down Mary's cheeks. The man continued. "We went to Jerusalem, but they knew of no baby kings. We then had an audience with King Herod and his scholars said the Messiah-king was to be born here, in Bethlehem of Judah." He paused, and murmured something to the others in their strange Eastern tongue. You could tell they did not trust Herod.

The Magi motioned for their gifts to be brought in. The first fumbled with the latch on a strongbox, and then opened the lid. Gold! Under the light from the flickering lamp coins and ingots sparkled. "For the King," he said simply, and then prostrated himself before the toddler. Little Jesus, beginning to wake up now, just sat there, watching intently.

The second visitor opened his chest. Ah, the fragrance of exotic spices flooded the room. Jesus sniffed and peered into the box, and then the second visitor prostrated himself before the child.

Then the third man brought the final box containing a fragile alabaster flask. He pulled the stopper and a new smell struck us, heavy and rich, the smell of death, myrrh, used to anoint the bodies of the dead. Strange gift for a toddler, I thought, even a royal one. He replaced the stopper, and then he, too, prostrated himself before the child.

Finally, the three excused themselves, and sort of backed out of the tiny room. Joseph reached out to Mary, who took Jesus in her arms. They just sat there, holding each other, trying to understand. The first man came to speak to Jacob. "Could we encamp in your pasture tonight?" Jacob nodded.

The man signalled, and the servants began unpacking tents. By now, half the town was standing on the road in front of our house watching, faces lit by sputtering torches. Servants trekked back and forth from the donkeys and camels to the three great pavilions they had set up, carrying all sorts of things. Finally, people drifted off to their homes, but I must confess, I did not sleep much.

Next morning the servants were up early reloading the animals and striking the grand tents. The Magi had been over to Joseph and Mary's house several times to see the child, and then they were gone, camel bells tinkling in the distance.

The next night, we were awakened by someone beating on our door. It was Joseph. Outside I could see Mary with little Jesus. Joseph was as white as a sheet. "Come in," said Jacob, "You look like you have seen a ghost."

"An angel," Joseph replied. "An angel appeared to me in a dream. He told me, 'Get up, take the child and his mother, and escape, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him.'" Mary was shaking so I went over and held her. "Jacob," Joseph asked, "may I buy one of your donkeys for the journey?"

"Of course."

Joseph removed a single gold coin from the folds of his robe. "That ought to cover it," he said, placing it firmly in Jacob's palm.

My husband's eyes lit up, his fingers closed over it, and he was just about to tuck it away when he stopped, and then handed the coin back to Joseph. "No, I will give you the donkey, and wish you Godspeed. It's the least we can do," he said, "for you...and for the Christ-child."

I hustled about, heart in my throat, putting together some food for the family, while Jacob and Joseph tied the heavy treasure boxes on Joseph's donkey. Then Joseph helped Mary and the child up onto the other donkey, our donkey, and embraced Jacob. "I do not know how we can thank you for what you have done for us these past two years," he was saying. "You have made us feel at home, and now ... and now we must leave you in the night. Thanks." Then he whispered, "You will not tell anyone where we went, will you?"

"Where are you going? Back to Nazareth?"

"It is best you did not know," Joseph said, "but I am sure we will see you again." And with that, he led the animals to the road, heading south. I waved, and little Jesus waved back.

"Jacob, do you think they will be all right by themselves with all that treasure?" I asked.

He looked at me with a tenderness and wonder I only saw in him now and again. "God who summoned the Magi and sent the angel is right there with them. They are not alone, Rebecca. How could they be alone?"

by Ralph F. Wilson at joyfulheart.com

### Inspirational DVD

#### The True Christmas Story with Ray Vander Laan

Travel to the land of Israel to discover fascinating truths about the events surrounding Jesus' birth.



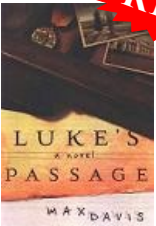
**R120.00**

## CHRISTMAS READS



**R120**

*The Alabaster Cross*  
by Richard Exley



**R120**

*Luke's Passage*  
by Max Davis



**R120**

*Then Came Faith*  
by Louise M. Gouge



**R110**

*Through Every Storm*  
by Shalene MacLaren



**R100**

*Providence*  
by Chris Coppernoll

## ENTERTAINMENT



**R130**

*Imagine: The Event*  
Live DVD



**R170**

*On Night With the King*  
DVD



**R99**

*Auto-B-Good*  
Kiddies DVD Series  
7 titles in Series



**R330**

*Bible Blurt*  
Board Game



**R75**

*Bible Mad Gab*  
Travel Size  
Larger version also available

## RESOURCES

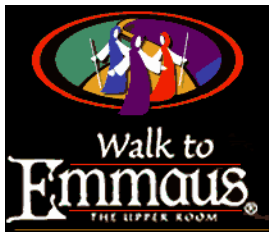
The following resources  
are available at  
**GRACE MEDIA**

### SUNDAY SCHOOL MATERIAL



**Alpha**

Alpha Course  
A Life Worth Living  
Alpha Marriage Course



Emmaus Handbooks



Willow Creek  
Small Group Study Guides



Way of the Master

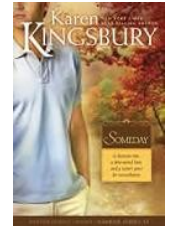
Visit our website for more  
information concerning  
small group resources

[www.gracemedia.co.za](http://www.gracemedia.co.za)

## COMING IN 2008



*Hillsong Kids*  
*Tell the World*



*Someday*  
by Karen Kingsbury

### EXTENDED SUMMER TRADING HOURS:

(5 November – 2 February)

**Monday – Friday:**

9am – 6pm

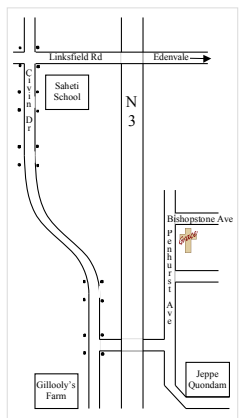
**Saturday:**

9am – 2pm

*Closed Sundays and some Public Holidays*

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From the N3, take the Linksfield Rd off ramp. Turn right up hill. Stay in left lane. Turn left into Civin Dr. At 4th set of lights, turn left under bridge. At t-junction turn left. Through the boom. We are ± 200m on the right hand side. Entrance is in Penhurst Ave.



**R40**



**R80**



**R30**



**R20**



**R100**