

From El Divino Pastor - Roswell, El Getsemaní - Artesia, and Monte Sinaí - Carlsbad

Merry Christmas!

La Voz Del Desierto

It snowed in Roswell five+ inches!



I hope I don't have an emergency today!

"Personal Perspectives of Christmas"

All too often we read the Bible as just history, or theology, or information. It is helpful to remember that events in the scriptures REALLY happened to REAL people, and had a profound impact on their lives; and because of their testimonies, it affects us on an individual basis!

What were the "PERSONAL PERSPECTIVES" of that first Christmas?

That first Christmas meant **PERSONAL SACRIFICE** to Mary and Joseph (*Luke 1:26-38; Matthew 1:18-25*). God didn't just choose a WOMAN, He chose a COUPLE, both godly, righteous and willing to make a great sacrifice. What were some of the sacrifices in their case? It put their marriage on the line. Can you imagine Joseph's to Mary's claim! Her story of an Angel appearing to her? It sacrificed BOTH of their reputations. Gossip, gossip and more gossip. Today, oh, the gossip when a young lady becomes pregnant outside the bond of marriage (at least in the church). It put their future at risk. Their plans together were sacrificed on the altar of GOD'S WILL! Wow! What a thought. It also endangered their fellowship with others, their immediate families, friends, etc. The apparent infidelity was hard for the Jew in those days to take. Then there is the absurd and even INSANE explanation of all that was going on. Then there was their having to move away from home. It cost them financially; it was a long trip just to pay taxes, yet God supplied through the wise men's gifts. And finally, as part of their personal Sacrifice, it put a severe emotional strain on them. When Christ enters a life, His presence does NOT make all your hardship go away. In fact, the change Christ brings often presents its own set of challenges! Some of you reading this can say an "Amen" to this. I know I can!

That first Christmas meant **PERSONAL FULFILLMENT** to Simeon (*Luke 2:25-35*). Simeon's perspective was very different from that of Jesus' family -this is what he (Simeon) had been waiting for his entire adult life! The name Simeon means "one who listens" – he had been listening to God and for the coming Messiah, and his attentiveness is here rewarded! He had an attitude of EXPECTANCY - God had told

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An Advent gift to us all from

Dr. David Maldonado

The Christmas Story

And so the child is born in a new land, a child born of humble immigrants who seek nothing more than life and hope for tomorrow. The young couple grabbed what they could carry with them and set out in the dark night. They were leaving familiar surroundings, as well as their home, friends, and family. They were expecting their first born and wished the child could be born at home surrounded by their community. But for the sake of the child, the young couple knew they must leave, so they walked out into the cold and dangerous desert night. It was a huge risk for them to leave, but it was also a leap of faith and hope that the land to which they were going would be a life-saving and life-sustaining place. As they made their way through the darkness, guided only by a sea of brilliant stars, they wondered what their future held for them and their child. It was their hope for the child that kept them focused and determined on their trek. They were afraid. Robbers were known to attack travelers in the night and in the desert. What if they were caught in the night? Would they be arrested and treated as common criminals? Would they be sent back to their homeland? Fears have a way of immobilizing some people. But for this young expectant couple, fear drove them even deeper into the night. What they feared the most would be life without hope, life without a future for their new family. In their whispers they encouraged each other and prayed that their child be born in the new land of hope. They had to arrive in their new land before day broke. But that was not to be. The child could no longer wait to be born. They were now well into their new land. They knew no one here and their surroundings looked strange and foreign. Where could they go for the birth of their child? Who would welcome them and offer hospitality? They knocked on the first door that they saw. The lights were on and the house looked welcoming. They saw the curtains move and a face peeked out to see who was knocking on the door. But the door did not open. From outside the house, they heard the voice of a woman inside. "Who is it?" she asked in a whisper. A male voice from within the house responded in a loud irritated voice as if wanting to be heard by the travelers standing outside the door. "Oh, nobody, just some foreigners probably looking for a handout," responded the male voice, adding, "they should go back to where they came from." The young couple, hearing the voices, covered their heads and kept going. They were determined to survive. They came to another house with its lights still on.

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A Word *from the* Pastor

Rev. Carlos E. Espinoza



What Disease or Diseases Make Our Churches Sick? Part 2

A Healthy church needs to develop an immune system to resist disease, else the church will get sick and perhaps even die. We do not mean the diseases of viruses, such as whooping cough, but ones that are even more destructive to our soul and future in eternity! It is much more sensible in our physical health to eat right, reduce stress, and exercise to prevent illness and live a longer, better quality life. If we do not, we get sick and miss one too many sick days and are fired from work, or get that one disease that may take our earthy life away. Yes, no one can add days to his life, but he can add a healthier more energy filled life. The church is a body too. The church needs to eat right and exercise by building love and purpose. Then, when a disease comes along, the church's white blood cells of good leadership can recognize, and get rid of it. Let continue to look at the last of the Diseases that can make our Churches SICK.

12. Legal-ism: This disease makes up all kinds of rules, whims, and procedures that distract people away from the true gospel. This can take the form of constricting theology that elevates man's efforts and works above grace to a series of actions that have to be done in a certain way, such as a certain dress, or the certain look, or knowing the right words for prayer or a hymn. Rules such as not playing cards, or not dancing become the focal point of what it means to be a Christian, and not the character and work of Christ. Therefore, people with this disease pronounce harsh judgment and sentencing, and are then careless of the consequences because they think they are right in their thinking. However, they are not in tune with our Lord. There is nothing wrong with rules, as long as the rules are not the things being worshiped or distracting people away from Christ. The cure is to teach a Biblical view of the law that reflects God's character as **HOLY** and **JUST!** Our responsibility is to reflect this character in our actions, as well. We are to model the deepest desires in life and the pleasures of living a life dedicated to please Christ! (*Psalm 10:4; Hosea 13:6; Matthew 7:3-52; Galatians 3:1-3; 13-15; 1 Timothy 6:18*)

13. Arrested Spiritual Growth: This disease is caused by the exact opposite of Hyper-spirit-ism, as the church with this disease refuses to recognize the Person and work of the Spirit. They deny spiritual gifts or the supernatural work of God (this is not about tongues or the assigned gifts). This will prevent people from spiritual growth, so they cannot grow in their relationships with Christ. This church will stagnate into a club and will not be able to grow. The cure is abundant, surrendered prayer for renewal! (*Romans 8:5; 1 Timothy 3:14-15*)

14. A Personality Addiction: This disease happens when the church is monopolized by a single personality. This could be a popular pastor who may be as solid as can be, but the only reason the people come is to hear him. This is not always a bad thing, but when that person moves on, the church quickly dies into oblivion, often to the point that they cannot pay the electric bill because so many people have left. This disease can also occur if a dysfunctional person takes the helm and attracts others to be codependent on him. The cure is to make sure the church has a purpose and mission that all the people have bought into, so the church is a body of Christ working together and not addicted to a single person. (*Romans 3:22-24; Ephesians 4:15-16*)

15. The Saint Disorder: This disease happens when Christians become Christians in name only. They feel that they are so good that their faith becomes a habit. They do not get into the Word, or exercise the disciplines of the faith because they think they do not need it! Other symptoms are that church participation is mainly just going through the motions and the service becomes meaningless rhetoric. This disease can happen in multigenerational churches where no others come in, and only the people who were born there attend. Being a part of this church is nothing more than a family tradition or social club. The cure, *Romans 13: 1-14*, put on Christ and **wake up!** There is one God and you are not He! (*1 Timothy 3:14-15*)

16. Hyper-Cooperative-ism: This disease happens when everyone is responsible for everything in the church and no one is in charge or in leadership of anything. The rule is to do as you will and please. Too much is focused on being a big, happy family, and there is an aversion of rules and regulations, so they overreact and it stifles the people. In addition, if evangelizing is to be done, everyone is encouraged to do it; however, it is not done because there are no teams, no direction, no vision, no purpose. This is a Christian equivalent to anarchy. Another aspect of this disease is a church that is so liberal that anything goes. No virtue, no solid doctrine, or real spiritual direction occurs. The cure is developing a good management system, training for leaders, and developing teams for ministry. In the liberal church, find God and repent! (*James 3:2; Hebrews 13:7,17*)

17. Grievance-ism: This disease is caused by keeping a careful list of grievances and refusing to forgive. This is the cancer of the church disease inventory and will rot out a church very quickly. Churches become crippled because members go around harboring that list of wrongs. These lists of wrongs turn into resentment that grows and grows until you have a church filled with people harboring resentment, all attacking one another. The cure is to respond to God's call to pursue peace with all people despite the temptations we may face, or the evil that is done to us. As Christians, we must purge ourselves of the desire to get even with one other! (*Proverbs 25: 21-22; Matthew 18:21-35; Romans 12:19-20; Hebrews 12:14-15*)

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Christmas 2011

with
Carmen L. Espinoza



An Interview with Joseph

Few events impact our lives like the birth of a child. Regardless of the cultural setting, new duties unfold, new responsibilities take shape, our hopes and dreams for the future suddenly have a new piece in the equation. As we enter this Christmas season, as we peek into the lives of heaven's First Family, I want us to focus on Joseph, the husband of Mary and foster father of Jesus. Perhaps we could interview him today. Let's step up to the edge of the cave where the manger is and try to get his attention. Psst! Psst! Joseph, Joseph! Could you come over here for a minute? I don't want to wake the baby, but I do want an opportunity to ask some questions about all that has happened to you these last 9 months. Is that OK? First, let me say that I've done some research on your family – boy, you've got quite a genealogical tree. I noticed Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Judah - among the early notables. Is there anything that you'd like to tell us about your family members? Joseph responds: "Some of them were rascals." Yes, it seems like every family has some of those. But what can you tell me about Abraham? You say you were amazed to learn of his faith? Did his faith strengthen your faith any? It did? Praise God for the faith of Abraham. Do you know anything about Isaac? Really? So what you're telling me is that he was one of the few in your family that only had one wife -that was Rebecca wasn't it? I thought so. Now let's see, they had two sons, Jacob and Esau and you are from Jacob's side, is that right? Boy, that Jacob was something else wasn't he? Jacob had 12 boys and your lineage comes through Judah, is that right? Judah seems to have some skeletons in his closet too. Joseph... I noticed some other names that struck me - King David, King Solomon (the world's wisest man), is there anything you want to tell us about these men? Let's start with King David. What can you tell me about him? You think he was a great king, you think that Jesus will sit on David's throne some day, [really!] you think he really loved God, but he had a weak spot in his morals. What did you learn from David and Joseph? About morals, I mean. You say you learned that men and women are supposed to keep their sexual relationships inside marriage only. I'd say that was a pretty valuable lesson. Is that why it was such a serious thing for you when you discovered that, while you were engaged to Mary, and she told you that she was going to have a child, that you seriously considered putting her away privately? I want to come back to that a little later on in the interview, but for now, let's continue talking about your ancestors. What can you tell me about Solomon? I know that everyone says he was the wisest man that ever lived. Did you learn some specific things from his life? What was that? You say you learned that things don't matter nearly as much as people. How did Solomon teach you that? Oh, you read his book, Ecclesiastes, where he said, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity and vexation of spirit." I'm sorry Joseph, what does vexation mean, Webster has not come out with his new Dictionary yet. Oh! It means –displeasure, an annoyance, a bother, an irritation, an aggravation. Joseph, what did Solomon teach you about God? You say he taught you not to let people turn your heart away from God? Boy, that's a big, important lesson, isn't it? Joseph, can we talk about your relationship with Mary and how you came to know that things you now know about her and the baby to which she gave birth? You and she were engaged – how does that work in the Jewish economy? Tell us how you felt when you discovered - by the way, did she tell you? - that she was carrying a child and you and she had never been intimate? Did you have grounds to get a divorce from her? I mean, every body around you would have supported your decision - right? What changed your mind? You had a what? A dream? Do you believe in dreams? You believed in this one! Especially since God was the one who was talking to you through His angel. Boy, am I glad that you listened when God spoke. Think what a tough time Mary and Jesus would have had, if you had not been in the picture. You and I both know how people wag their tongues when they think they have some juicy bit of gossip. Joseph, can I ask you some questions about Mary and the baby Jesus? In light of the fact that the shepherds have created some commotion over the birth of Jesus, do you think there will be any trouble with the authorities? You don't know. What's it like there in the cave? Special? What do you mean? The warmth of the animals bodies keep the place relatively warm - isn't that just like God? Mary had an easy time with the birth? Boy, that's wonderful, especially since there are no medical facilities close by – and you didn't even had a midwife. Tell me what the shepherds said when they came. They said an angel spoke to them - you could relate to that couldn't you. They said that the baby in the manger was going to be savior of the world. What do you think about that? Oh, the angel told you that too. What did he say? Thou shalt call his name JESUS for He shall what? Save His people from their sins. I must say, Joseph, you have quite a responsible task ahead of you. I hope you're up to those two o'clock feedings -just kidding. Well, I'm sure you need to get back to Mary and baby Jesus so I'll let you go. Thanks for taking time to talk with me and my friends here at "Women's Corner with Carmen" I think we have a little better understanding of some of the miraculous things God has done. Oh, and be careful on your journey back to Nazareth. I hope that baby Jesus grows up to be a good carpenter, like you. Oh, I forgot; yes, He's going to be the Savior. Thank you for reminding me. I'll let you go now Joseph, I need to run to the airport in Jerusalem and catch my flight back to Roswell, NM to give these notes to my husband, he is a preacher and he tells the Christmas Story every year. But this year he will want to tell your side of the Christmas Story on Sunday, December 25th. Thank you for your time Joseph, God bless you and would you give the baby a kiss and Mary a hug. Bye!

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The Christmas Story

By Dr. David Maldonado

"Maybe they will be more welcoming," cried the young pregnant woman. This time, the door opened slightly. "Who are you? What do you want? Where are you from?" the voice called from within the slightly opened door. "We just arrived and our child is ready to be born," responded the young father-to-be. "We are not from here. We are not asking for charity. All we need is for our child to be born safely. I am willing to work to repay you for your kindness." "Humph! Some more of them. They just cause problems for the rest of us. I wish they would stop coming. I wish they would just leave. Our whole town is changing because of them, but I could sure use his cheap labor in the morning. They are good workers. Hope nobody is looking," thought the man from behind the door. With a suspicious glare, the man yelled out, "OK, you can stay in the back, but don't make trouble or we will call the police on you and send you back where you came from." And so the child is born in a new land, a child born of humble immigrants who seek nothing more than life and hope for tomorrow. A child is born in a new land and there is life and hope for a family. Many of us know this as the story of the birth of Jesus. It is also the story of the birth of the child of the immigrant today. It is the story of hope!

18. Apathy-itis: This disease is caused by being overwhelmed with all the stresses and struggles in ministry to the point of shrugging our shoulders and giving up, but still going through the motions. This is apathy. Another symptom of apathy is thinking the greatness is in the past, and the past is then worshipped and adored. All views and passions to Christ are rooted in the past and the vine is now withered. It is our human nature to consider comfort and security a primary concern. There is nothing wrong with that, as long as it does not make us complacent and take us away from the goals and reasons we are in the pulpit, or in leadership. If we are too comfortable, we become apathetic, not wanting to stretch ourselves in our personal walk. This, then, becomes a slippery slope of not desiring to stretch the congregation, or being afraid of making any challenges that may offend someone's pride. This disease will produce no growth, no serious discipleship, no serious Bible studies, no serious teaching from the pulpit, just basic stuff to please and police people. The cure is to **Wake Up!** We need to be on guard for stressful and overwhelming situations, for pride, and for being too comfortable in our positions. When we are not growing, and not on our guard, then we will venture into the land of apathy, and that is one place that will not grow any fruit or give any glory to the Lord. (*Matthew 13:25-26; Hosea 13:6; Romans 13; Revelation 3:1-6; 14-18*)

19. Ethnic-ism: This disease is caused by a fear of an ethnic group, or a church in a transitioning neighborhood, such as a white church where its members once lived in the neighborhood, but over the years, people moved away so everyone is commuting. Then, people of a different social economic or ethnic class surround the church, and the church does not reach out to them. Eventually, the neighborhood sees the church as aloof and unfriendly to them! The church then becomes a commuter church cut off from their mission and place in the community. This church will grow stagnate as people are unwilling or unable to commit and be involved, because the time and distance is too much. One cure is to move the church. However, this must be the very, very last resort, as it is usually way out of God's Will. Only consider a move if you plant or help another church take your place. Then, give them your facilities, and hand the keys to someone else, as the church belongs to God and the neighborhood, and not to you! A second solution is to break down social fears and get involved. Encourage staff and leaders to move back, take a risk, and reclaim the neighborhood for Christ by modeling His character and care. Have a shared ministry with another church, or share your facilities with a pastor that speaks the language and/or culture, and cooperate with them as a team. (*Mark 12:30-32; Luke 6:27-31; Ephesians 4:29-32; Colossians 4:5; Hebrews 12:14-15; 13:1-2; James 4:7-10; 17*)

Do not be afraid to ask someone to seek another church if they are fighting against the church leadership *apart from motivation of Godly principles!* Never force people out because of differences of opinion; iron sharpens iron. Seek causes and motivations by listening and through prayer. (*Romans 16:17-18 & Titus 3:9-11*)

Our hope: *"Nevertheless, I will bring health and healing to it; I will heal my people and will let them enjoy abundant peace and security." (Jeremiah 33:6) Some of us need to go to the God and ask for Help! May God bless you this day.*

"Personal Perspectives of Christmas"

Simeon that he would see Israel's Messiah before his death, and he *LONGED* for that event! Question? Are you living every day looking for His return? WE need to live every day looking for His return! Simeon's response was **"I CAN DIE NOW!"** His life had received its ultimate fulfillment. When Christ enters a life, He brings *MEANING* and *FULFILLMENT!* Amen? Amen!

That first Christmas meant PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY to Anna (*Luke 2:36-38*). She found Christ - finding Christ is not just a PERSONAL benefit. She took on the responsibility of *TAKING HIM TO OTHERS!* (*vs. 38*) Knowing Jesus is just the beginning - each day we have multiple opportunities to share our Savior, *ESPECIALLY* during this great time of year! Yet those opportunities go whizzing by in the blur of holiday activities as we selfishly go about OUR business, instead of the Master's.

We can show a lost world the REALITY of Christmas, and not the hype; the PEACE of Christmas, and not the stress; the MESSAGE of Christmas, not the *MATERIALISM!*

When Christ enters a life, it means gives us a *PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY!*

What a difference Jesus makes - when He comes into your life, He brings with Him a requirement of our sacrifice, He brings with Him meaning, joy, and fulfillment, and He also brings a responsibility.

Unsaved - Have you experienced for yourself the *INDESCRIBABLE JOY* and *PEACE* that comes from *KNOWING HIM*, from having your sin cleansed?

Christian - Are you taking up your cross DAILY and following Him? Do you take your responsibility *SERIOUSLY?*

Have a blessed Christmas, enjoy it with the family and friends, remember that God loved you so much that He gave His Son so that we could live! Pastor Carlos E. Espinoza