

# Your Custom Masthead here.

 December

Pastor's article or most important story of the month goes here.

Pastor's  
photo  
here

An alternate background without the Joy graphic is available on the pasteboard to the left.

 2011

 Service  
Schedule

 JOY  
TO THE WORLD

**PRAY FOR**  
Pray for our  
**Missionaries**

**Birthdays/  
Anniversaries**

**December**

# HOPE & HISTORY

*Hope & history* are both powerful influences in our lives. History (past events and experiences) plays a significant role in shaping our world view, our beliefs and outlook on life. We all have individual history, and we share a collective history with different groups we associate with, family history, church history, community history, national history. God devotes a significant amount of scripture to recording His history. History teaches us who God is, how we can know Him, how to be the people of God, and how to make good decisions and avoid harmful ones. Hope (belief that a better future is possible) can also deeply influence our world view. While history looks back, hope looks forward; history instructs, and hope inspires. Hope empowers us to learn lessons from our past and move forward. The story of God's history is a story of hope – because God acts on our behalf, inserting his love and grace into our history, we can share a future better than any we could imagine.

While history can be a powerful and godly influence in our lives, our enemy often uses our past as a deterrent to hope. Satan is at war with God, and attempts to turn anything good into something evil. Because of this, our histories contain many dark and painful experiences, and these too can be powerful influences on our lives, especially in the absence of hope. Repeatedly in scripture we are encouraged to focus on the hope we have in Christ; the promise of this future helps put our past in perspective, and keep us on the path of

God. Perhaps more than any other area of our lives, we are especially encouraged to apply hope to our relationships with each other.

History often teaches us to view others with suspicion and distance, because we're all human, we all make mistakes, and we often hurt each other. Hope allows us to view people with forgiveness and unity, because God is able to redeem all of us. Peter asked Jesus how often he should forgive someone who sins against him, and throws out what he thought to be a generous number, seven times. Jesus replies not seven, but seventy times seven. To illustrate his instruction, Jesus then tells Peter a story (you can read it in Matthew 18). The moral of the story is that because God has shown us unlimited grace, mercy, and forgiveness, we must do the same for each other.

History tells us that someone who wrongs us deserves to be punished, is likely to do it again, and should repay us for the wrongs they've committed. The hope Jesus came to give us tells us that because of His sacrifice, all sins can be erased and we can escape the sin cycle. Jesus paid the price for us! When we apply that same hope to our relationships (as Jesus instructed us), we learn that when someone wrongs us, their sin is erased, they can escape the sin cycle, and Jesus paid the price for them, so they have nothing for which to repay us.

Hope applied to our relationships is viewing people with forgiveness and unity. Saying we forgive someone but continuing to treat them with suspicion and distance, expecting them to repeat the offense, or expecting them to repay us for the offense, is not forgiveness at all. We must forgive our offenders and

## home cookin'

### Banana Peanut Salad

#### Salad Dressing:

1 1/2 c. sugar	4 T. flour
1 1/2 c. milk	2 eggs
Pinch of salt	1/2 c. vinegar

#### Bananas (sliced)

Roasted salted peanuts (put peanuts in plastic bag and crush with rolling pin)

Mix sugar, flour, and pinch of salt. Add beaten eggs and milk. Cook until thick. Add vinegar and cook until thick. Cool. Place a layer of sliced bananas in bottom of bowl; cover with a layer of salad dressing. Sprinkle with crushed peanuts. Continue alternating layers until all salad dressing is used (end with salad dressing and sprinkle with peanuts). Sprinkle with pepper if desired. May be served with saltine crackers.

accept them in unity as if they never did anything wrong – the same way God forgives and accepts us.

Jesus does not promise that if we live in this kind of hope no one will ever offend us again. Nor does he tell us that this kind of hope applied to relationships will prevent someone from repeating an offense. The Bible is clear that many people will reject God's offer of forgiveness, and they will reject ours as well. But those of us who have accepted God's grace are called to give it as freely as He does. When we continue to apply God's hope to our relationships, regardless of our history, He can use our acts of forgiveness and unity to open the hearts of those who offend us to His grace and mercy, and change their history forever. The correct application of hope and history can help us build strong, godly and lasting relationships.



### FINDING ELIM

By Dave Nelson



I WAS BORN IN THE SAME MONTH AS SOMEONE FAMOUS. I BET YOU CAN'T GUESS WHO IT IS...

Church Logo/return  
address



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<p><b>December</b></p>				<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>18</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>25</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>31</b>

PRACTICE  
PRACTICE

Kids News

*You helped!*

**Youth**  
Christmas  
PARTY

 Christmas  
Party

Family News

anticipation

Thanks!!

*We Say*

MERRY CHRISTMAS

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

 Christmas Eve  
Candlelight Service

 Christmas  
Dinner

 Christmas  
Food Drive

 Christmas  
Food Bank

 New Years Eve  
Candlelight Service

*Let's give . . .*

This page contains some of the custom graphics that were included with this issue. All graphics are scalable and have transparent backgrounds.