

ELEMENT

JAN/FEB 2012

DISPATCH

Christmas for Kids



2011 IN REVIEW



ISSUE #1

An abstract background featuring various paint splatters and brushstrokes in orange, green, red, blue, and yellow. A large, irregular white shape, resembling a map of Africa, is centered in the upper half of the image. The word "Genesis" is written in a blue, serif font across the middle of this white shape.

Genesis

Watch online now



**FEATURED
STORY**

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ISSUE #1

Hello World.

If you don't know anything about computer coding, the simplest computer program to develop is the above. Get the medium to output the words: "Hello World." It is a basic element of coding – write a script to display some text. Easy. What else to say other than: Hi, I'm here. I do exist. It's the next line of code that is the hardest. You have to ask the questions: "What do I want the program to do?", "What is its purpose?" Nobody needs a program that simply says "hello." What is its objective and how do you achieve it?

It is with this that we embark on something new. Welcome to *Element Dispatch*. I'm glad you've found it. The idea is simple... be an instrument to show what Jesus is doing in and around Element Christian Church. It is our desire to bring you stories, articles, statistics, imagery, insights and so much more, so that you can see what He is doing.

We want to tell the stories.

Stories are a part of our culture. From magazines to movies, books and television, we are captivated by stories. It occurred to me that as the church, we could always do better sharing the stories of God's grace, redemption, and good work. We hope to bring to you such stories. This won't be about promoting what's next, but looking at what has happened by going deeper, and praising God for His many blessings.

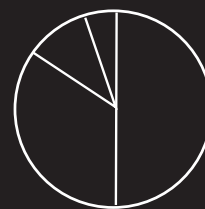
So, as we begin a new year, with this first publication of *Element Dispatch*, what better way than to look back at 2011 and remember? No, we can't highlight everything... but hopefully you will learn about something that you didn't know before. Hopefully you will see God at work. We have many ideas in the months to come for *Dispatch*, and we look forward to your input, feedback, and ideas.

So... Hello World.

Now on to the hard part...

Michael Reed

**We
want to
tell the
stories.**



2011 IN REVIEW

JANUARY

MISSING WORDS

10 BAPTISMS

LAMENTATIONS

SPIRIT

409 EASTER
BIGGEST SUNDAY

SUMMER OF LOVE

4th of JULY PARTY

6 WEDDINGS

PEOPLE OF HOPE

PEOPLE OF HOPE

AGAPE

SAINTS

547 ATTENDED
CHRISTMAS EVE

FINANCIAL PEACE
UNIVERSITY

26 families dumped
\$200,000
of debt.

3 SOFTBALL TEAMS

WOMEN'S
BIBLE STUDIES

10 Community Partners
In Caring Projects

FILM & THEOLOGY

CHANGE THEIR VIEW

25 families
growing closer

YOUTH SUMMER CAMP

ELEMENT MOMS

PUMPKIN KILLING

LEADERS WHO LAST

50% OF ATTENDERS IN
GOSPEL COMMUNITIES

SUNDAY
AVERAGE:

315

DECEMBER

Christmas for KIDS



story by Manette Shaver
photographs by Luke Severn



A bike was donated, and raffled away during the breakfast.



1 Day. 47 Kids. Christmas.



Another year has gone by and the biggest, most successful **Christmas for Kids** is under our belt! With roughly 200% growth since 2010, it's probably fair to say Christmas for Kids is quickly becoming synonymous with Element Christian Church. It is our goal to be God's hands and feet as we strive to reach out to Orcutt, Santa Maria and the Central Coast as a whole.

We sat down with Pam Brown to discuss...

Why does Element host Christmas for Kids?

“To be the heart of
Jesus to the children
of our community.”

Pam went on to explain that part of Element’s goal in providing this program to our community is to reach the kids of this community who are falling through the cracks and who, otherwise, may not have Christmas. The program focuses on the kids in our community who may be in a situation in which a parent is sick and is receiving expensive medical treatments. Perhaps there is a child living with a single mom who is working multiple jobs to make ends meet. There are children who have a parent in prison, thereby forcing the other parent into that single parent state. Often times these families are barely paying their bills and putting food on the table, yet they don’t qualify for government assistance. This is precisely why Element strives to bring Christmas, in its truest sense of the word, to each of these children.

How and why did Christmas for Kids get started?

Pam told the story of Christmas for



Kids from the beginning, but the beginning of the story isn't in 2009 in Orcutt, California. For Pam, Christmas for Kids began 35 years ago in a town of only 5,000 people back in Illinois. She told the story of an older man who had spent much of his childhood in an orphanage in that small town in Illinois. One day, some "strangers" showed up in that orphanage with the purpose of bringing a real Christmas to each of these children. The strangers took the children to eat and then followed that by a shopping trip on which the children were able to pick the toys and gifts they wanted. They spoke about being Christians, and although as a child he didn't understand what that meant, he knew beyond a shadow of a doubt that these people had given him a Christmas like no other. He told Pam that it was a Christmas that he would never forget and how those strangers probably had no idea how special that day was to him. At that point, Pam did not become part of Christmas for Kids, but rather Christmas for Kids became a part of her. In talking to her, it is clear that the very essence of this program reaches down to her soul.

Fast forward to 2009 in Orcutt, California: the very first Christmas at Element Christian Church, and Pam sees a need around her to start Christmas for Kids to be

a blessing to the Central Coast.

When asked why she personally continues to do this year after year, Pam's eyes welled up with tears as she plainly said...

"I just have a heart
for kids and
I love Christmas."

Here we are three years later, three Christmas for Kids later and now looking ahead to the fourth and fifth and thirty-fifth! *(By the way, 35 years later that church in that small town in Illinois is still reaching out to their community through Christmas for Kids.)*

That is the legacy Element wants to leave - a group of God's people loving, serving, and reaching out to people in need.

Doing Christmas for Kids is always a challenge as it is difficult to find legitimate needs. Everyone is referred to us by someone at Element. We make sure there is a connection because we don't want to give without the extension of community and friendship.

It is living OUT gospel community.

The growing need in any community is Christ, but Christmas for Kids is a tangible way for people to SEE Jesus living through His people in more than a handout; it is an extension of a grace-filled community of faith. We want lives touched with the goodness of Christ.

What do we do for the kids?

As Pam details this very special day in the lives of these children, it is potentially one of the best days of their lives thus far and perhaps the best Christmas ever! Their day begins with a huge breakfast at Element Christian Church. The meal is hot and fresh; fully prepared and served by volunteers from the church. The

kids have their choice of eggs, pancakes, sausage, cinnamon rolls and candy. They can choose anything they want and can have as much as they'd like. A dream breakfast for any kid! During breakfast, volunteer shoppers sit with the children in an effort to get to know them, learn the things they are interested in and simply show them Christ's love.

After breakfast the volunteer shoppers take the children out shopping anywhere they would like to go. For some children, they want to get the best deals possible in order to get as many gifts as possible. For others, it is all about having those few name brand items that ordinarily would not

Pancakes, Eggs, Meat, Cinnamon Rolls & Candy for Breakfast



be affordable for their family. Pam shared the story of a young teenage girl who wanted nothing more than clothes from Aeropostale, so her shopper drove her to the Aeropostale outlet store in Pismo Beach. As it turns out, they were having a great Christmas sale, and she was able to get lots of clothes!

After everyone is all shopped out, everyone meets up at Giovanni's Pizzeria for lunch. It's a great time to wind down and share stories about all the things that were purchased that morning. Joy and excitement oozes from these children and saturates the air. It is contagious!



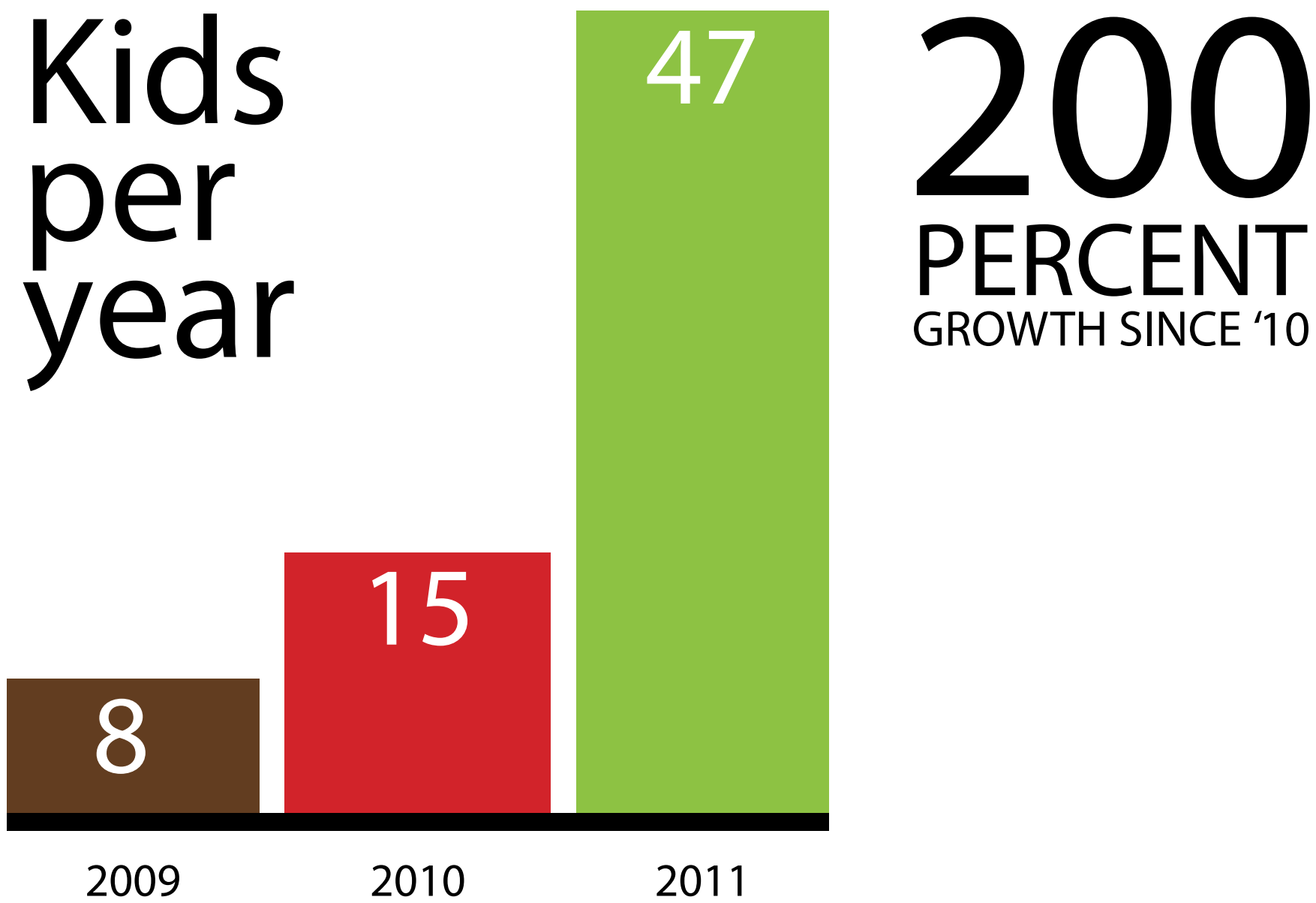


What sort of growth have you seen over the 3 years that Element Christian Church has hosted Christmas for Kids?

The growth over the last few years has been exponential. In the first year, 2009, there were 8 children. Absolutely everything is done through donations and volunteers. So, that year the children were given \$150 in spending money, a turkey and a gift card for groceries.

The following year, in 2010, there was nearly 100% growth from 2009 with 15 kids involved. With the donations given that year, each child received \$125 in spending money and grocery gift cards.

In 2011, there was an astounding 47 children! Of which, 6 were from the Good Samaritan Shelter and 4 were from Domestic Violence Solutions. Everyone worked diligently to acquire enough donations for such a large number of children. Ultimately, they received \$120 in spending money. That's \$5,640 in total, not including breakfast and lunch! In addition to all of that, the children also left with a small goody bag from Jamba Juice.



If the growing trend continues, will Christmas for Kids see 300% growth, which would mean about 140 children, for 2012? Perhaps. We'll just have to wait and see. Jesus said in Mark 10, *"Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these."* This is the very essence of what Christmas for Kids is doing by sharing Christ's love and mercy with these children.

How many volunteers does it take to pull off everything? What do the volunteers do?

This year there were over 60 volunteers. The volunteers are responsible for planning, decorating, cooking, setting up, cleaning, serving food, shopping for food and decorations and, of course, shopping with the children. Pam and her Gospel Community did the coordinating and planning, but admittedly, could not do everything without the support of the members of Element. She went on to say that of the 60 volunteers, about 40 were volunteers who took the children shopping.

What would you like to see done for Christmas for Kids 2012?

"We need to start earlier, put together a team of people to start getting donations earlier in the year and fine tune the selection process." Simple, yet profound. In only three

years time, the program and its volunteers have done such a wonderful job that the only thing needed is "fine tuning." That speaks volumes to efforts put forth by Pam and each and every volunteer involved.

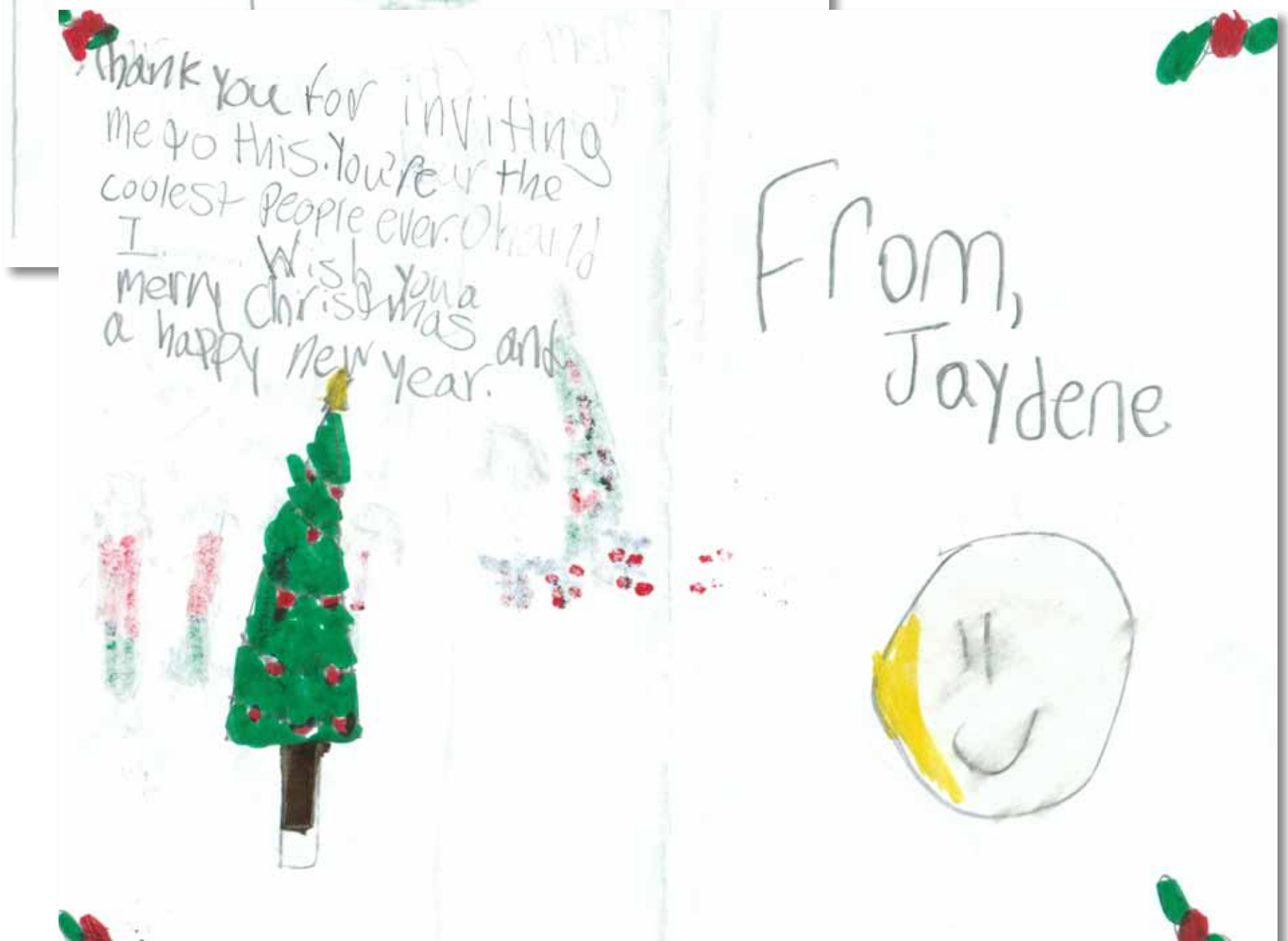
"I wanted my son to have the experience of giving to others without expecting anything in return, and to know the importance of how giving so little can mean so much to someone else."

Jamie Hendricks
Volunteer





Thank you card
from Jaydene,
age 8.



A Special Thank you from Pam...

I would like to thank EVERYONE who helped to make Christmas For Kids a reality this year for so many families. This ministry reaches out to hurting children during a time of year when joy and happiness should be abundant. There were so many of you who rolled up your sleeves, dove in, and did whatever it took to bless these little ones. It was amazing to see the love, support, and energy that all of you gave as our number of children “blossomed” to a bustling crowd of 47. Some of you gave money, donated goody bags, food, or toys, helped to organize, decorated tables, cooked and served breakfast, baked cookies, sought donations, joined the setup and cleanup crew, or spent the day shopping with the kids. It was an awesome experience to see the excitement on the children’s faces, and heartwarming to see our church body come together to bless others with Jesus’ love. A huge thank you to all.

*Blessings,
Pam Brown*





ALL TO THE GLORY

Practical Advice For God's Man

By Jonathan Whitaker

The 1981 film *Chariots of Fire* dramatically depicts the apex of Scottish Olympian Eric Liddell's competitive sprinting career. Liddell, a Christian missionary, was recruited to the English National Team for the 1924 Olympic Games. The film captures the struggle between his desire to serve God in the mission field of China and his desire to use his God-given speed to run for his country. In a moment of doubt leading up to the Olympic trials, Liddell's sister, Jenny, questions why he continues to run when he has God's work to do. In this unforgettable scene, Eric Liddell captures an enduring truth about God's character: "Jenny, God has made me for a purpose -- for China. But he has also made me fast, and when I run, I feel his pleasure."

Psalm 147:10-11 says, "His delight is not in the strength of the horse, nor His pleasure in the legs of a man, but the LORD takes pleasure in those who fear Him." Eric Liddell loved the Lord and ultimately gave his life for Him in the mission field. Liddell understood that he did not have to forsake one part of himself to serve the Lord. God created him to be fast, and God delighted in His creation because His creation loved Him back.

As Christian men, we all struggle at times with the balance of serving God versus serving ourselves. We know that God entrusted us as husbands, fathers, and sons to lead and be an example of Godliness to our loved ones. This is a struggle for all of us. We want to serve God, but where do we start? Do I have to sacrifice part

of my identity to appease God? For many of us the solution has been a facade of duplicity. We have compartmented our lives into the categories of “Christian Guy” and “Normal Guy.” But guess what? God doesn’t want that. Guys, listen: God created you with your particular talents and personality to accomplish the work He has set before you. Ephesians 2:10 tells us, “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”

In his book *A Shattered Visage*, Dr. Ravi Zacharias commented on Eric Liddell’s understanding of his relationship with God by saying, “His enjoyment of God in every endeavor and service for Christ was a strong reminder that nothing for the Christian is essentially secular.” By virtue of our salvation in Jesus Christ, everything -- everything -- that we do should be an expression of our love and relationship with the Living God. When you hug your kids, or sing in your car, or eat a sandwich, or preach a sermon, in everything that you do you should glorify God. That sounds like a lot of pressure, but is it? God has uniquely equipped us all to have a relationship with Him and He delights in us as we seek Him in relationship.

It is with great pleasure that I will endeavor over the course of forthcoming issues of the *Element Dispatch* to help the men of our congregation strengthen their relationship with God. The goal of each article I write will be simply this: Men can serve God and their families effectively by living their lives as a worship to God. I promise to keep the philosophical opining to a minimum, and instead focus on practical truth and actions we can take as Christian men to live out our faith in the home and at the office.

I leave you with this challenge. Each day for the next 30 days, deliberately worship God with an action that you would not normally consider worship. Try holding the door for a stranger as worship, or enjoying a nice meal as worship, or even calling your grandma as worship. First Corinthians 10:31 commands,

“Whether you
eat or drink or
whatever you do,
do all to the
Glory of God!”

LOOKING FORWARD

2012

MAR. 18th
BAPTISMS

LABOR DAY BBQ

MOE EVENTS:

KAYAKING, TASTINGS, GOLF,
FAMILY LAKE DAY, DEEP SEA FISHING,
BIKE RIDE, PUMPKIN KILLING

SUMMER
CHANGE THEIR VIEW

SUMMER
FILM & THEOLOGY

GOOD FRIDAY
SEDER MEAL
APR. 7th

AUG: KIDS CAMP

WOMEN'S EVENTS:

MOVIE NIGHT, "MORE" CONFERENCE,
WOMEN TEACHING WOMEN, CARD MAKING,
OPEN MIC NIGHT, ORNAMENT EXCHANGE

IN THE NEXT ISSUE...
Get to know our newest elder

Questions or Ideas for DISPATCH?
Write us at: dispatch@ourelement.org



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