

5B

## RELIGION

## Christmas bazaar

Christmas sale at Little Rock features unique Christmas gifts. See Church News page 6B.

## Sunday School LESSON



## Living In God's Light

It is generally agreed that the beloved apostle John wrote the three general epistles that bear his name. He was probably one of the first two apostles called by Jesus. This letter was probably written between A.D. 90-95 after John's Gospel and before the book of Revelation.

Scholars claim that in this letter John is writing against an early form of a heresy that came to be called Gnosticism in the second century. Gnostics claimed to have special esoteric knowledge given by God. A major tenet of an early group was that all matter is evil. This led to two different prongs of doctrine and practice.

One group said that since all matter is evil, one ought to practice asceticism. This led to punishing the body, avoiding any physical pleasure, and monasticism.

The message John is talking about is Jesus as the eternal Word. Christ was in the beginning with God; he cooperated with the Father in creation. Thus, Jesus is the source of their light in our lesson.

John claimed historical reliability for his witness to Jesus. He personally had heard the wonderful teachings, had seen the marvelous miracles performed, had touched the real body of Jesus during the Lord's life and probably after his resurrection. As one of the inner three who had gone with the Lord on the mount of transfiguration and into the Garden of Gethsemane, John was particularly suited to witness for the truth of the gospel message.

It had become John's duty to witness to that perfect life and light in his time. Now that responsibility has been passed on to us. We must testify with word of mouth an deed of life to the living reality of Christ by imitating him in our daily lives.

The antithesis between light and darkness is a favorite concept with John. It is used frequently in his Gospel. The difference between true spiritual light and darkness can be analyzed as follows; light is truth - darkness is error; light is righteousness - darkness is sin; light is in logical order; truth produces righteousness and righteousness leads to life, abundant and eternal. On the other hand error results in sin and sin brings death; spiritual, physical, and eternal death, which is a final and complete separation from God. Death means separation, not extinction.

Fellowship means sharing. When we follow what John and the other actual witnesses of the life of Christ have declared to us about Jesus and his will, we share Christ's love, joy, and salvation with these early Christian saints and also with people around us today who see our lives.

The word for fellowship here is *koinonia*, which means "having in common." The early church continued in fellowship in many ways. Their material goods were held in common and shared with others in need. The message of salvation was shared with others. They shared with one another around the Lord's Table. When Paul refers to the Lord's Supper in Corinthians 10:16, he uses the same word, *koinonia*. Paul also speaks of sharing Christ's sufferings as a way to know him.

To walk in darkness is not just committing heinous sins as adultery, thievery, and murder, but is both not knowing what is right and not doing what is right in our daily lives. So we must study the Word of God to know the truth, then live by it.

Then we will not only feel close to him but know what he would have us to do in any life situation.

John acknowledges in this verse that even though we walk in the light, in fellowship with Christ, we might sin, but in such a case there is a way of forgiveness through the blood of Christ.

## Women with AIDS touches congregation

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

EDEN - Rosalyn Jackson walked to the pulpit and spoke from her heart as one more voice hoping to chase AIDS out of the shadows.

She read from a speech she had been writing for several weeks. She clasped and unclasped her

hands. Then she stopped referring to her notes and began speaking. She cried at times.

Jackson is 30, and her son is 4. Both have tested positive for HIV, the virus that causes AIDS, and both receive treatment at clinics at Baptist Hospital in Winston-Salem. Jackson believes that a man she once dated infected her

through sex, and she unknowingly passed the disease on to her unborn son.

She planned the service at her church Sunday to draw attention to World AIDS Day, which was Monday. It is a time meant to educate the public about ways to fight and deal with HIV, which has infected 30 million adults and

children worldwide.

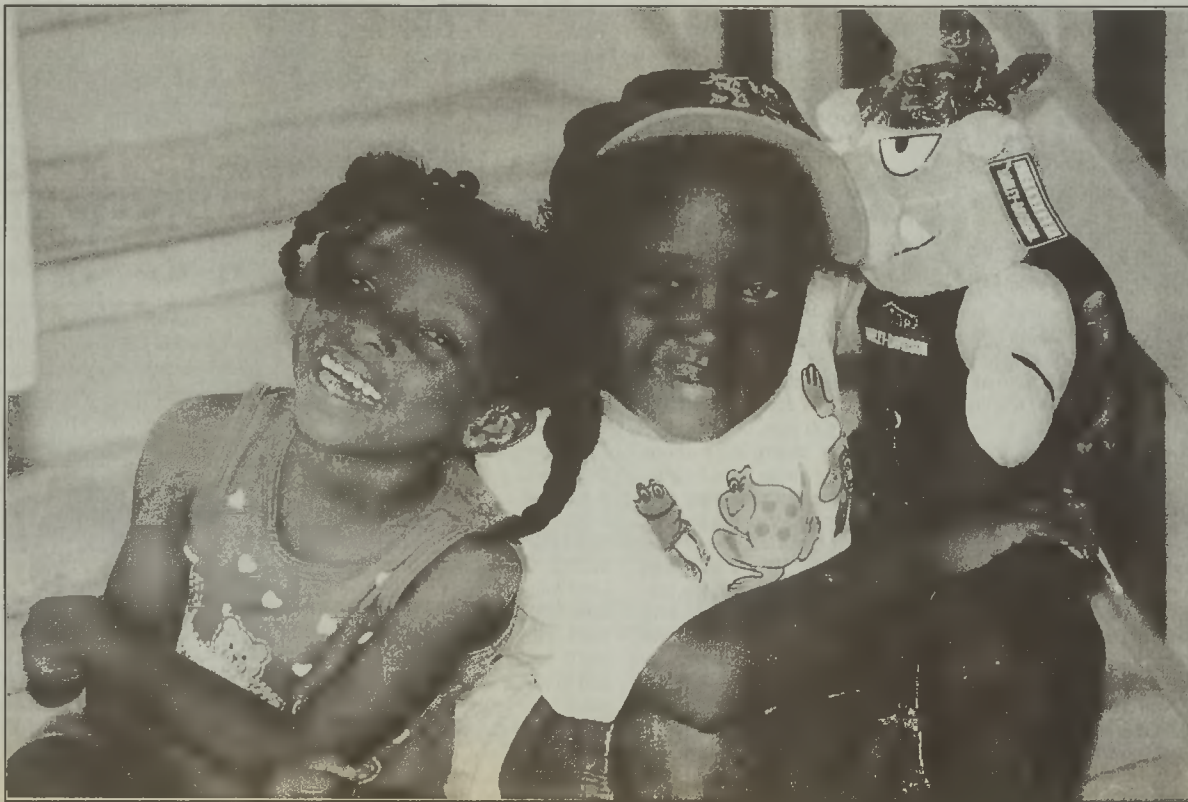
Jackson stressed the basics: People who engage in unprotected sex or inject drugs expose themselves to HIV.

At first, she had nightmares in which she saw herself in a hospital bed dying. She has left those visions behind. She tells herself

that AIDS will not kill her.

Four years after testing HIV-positive, the only adverse physical effect she experiences is occasional shortness of breath, she said. Nor has her son experienced adverse physical effects, Jackson said. The drugs that mother and son take are helping, their caregivers say.

## She lived to the fullest



PHOTO/FILE

Temika Sheppard, right, plays with sister Sherrika outside her grandmother's North Charlotte apartment. The nine-year old, who died Sunday, touched the hearts of many. She received gifts and was a guest on the "Breakfast Brothas" Morning Show.

## Youngster with cancer fought hard

By Jeri Young  
THE CHARLOTTE POST

For two years, Temika Sheppard bravely fought brain cancer.

When chemotherapy left her bald, she told her mother she needed a hat.

When adults whispered that she only had a short time to live, she got angry.

"She said they didn't know what they were talking about," her mother, Wanda Sheppard, said in an interview with The Post in September. "I had never seen her that angry."

Temika, 9, died early Sunday morning, surrounded by her family. She suffered from a rare form of brain cancer, Primitive Neuroectodermal, that strikes the brain and central nervous system.

Two weeks ago, Temika took a turn for the worse. She complained constantly of throbbing headaches and had a hard time moving around.

"She would just scream," her uncle, Jerome Sheppard, said. "It just hurt her so bad. It was so hard to watch. I had a hard time

walking into her room. She was just in so much pain. I hated to see her like that."

Jerome Sheppard says that Temika's living as long as she did was nothing short of a miracle. In July, doctors at Carolinas Medical Center told the family Temika had only three months to live. Despite the grim prognosis, Temika continued to be active.

"Up until two weeks ago, she was real active," Jerome Sheppard said. "She did just about what she wanted. She just went down so fast."

Often, Temika had a hard time walking and speaking, but relatives and friends say nothing stopped her. She kept up her spirits and theirs.

"She was tough," said family friend Pamela Harris. "She really tried to be strong when she wasn't. You knew she was weak, but she would still try to walk around and play with her little sister. She even went to school. She had a tough spirit."

Harris, who lives near the family in Fairview Homes, and her sister Vivian Jenkins launched a campaign in July to

let people know of Temika's plight. The two and other Fairview Homes denizens spent hours canvassing Charlotte with flyers and asking for prayers.

To make sure Temika had what she wanted and needed, the two formed the Temika Sheppard Foundation to raise money and circulated hundreds of copies of her wish list. Temika wanted to ride a motorcycle and visit Disney World. She also wanted to meet a professional athlete.

"When people heard about her they just wanted to do things for her," Harris said. "That's just the way people are."

Harris said it's difficult to list all of the people who helped. Trails of Thunder, an African American motorcycle club showered Temika with stuff animals and took on her an 8-mile motorcycle ride. WPEG radio's Breakfast Brothas invited Temika to be a special guest on their morning show. Residents of the Piper Glen community arranged a huge birthday bash for her and several members of the Carolina Panthers visited

and brought presents.

Harris, who gets choked up when she talks about Temika, said people asked for nothing in return.

"They just gave and gave," she said.

When Temika wanted a chihuahua, brothers Ellis and Maurice Hunter of A Affordable Bailbonds/Hunter Budget Bail Bonding searched the country until they found one and had it shipped from Kansas.

Temika named the dog, Shorty-do-wop.

Jerome Sheppard agreed people were kind.

"People were nice," he said. "In a way it's kind of a relief. She was in so much pain. She's in a better place now and that makes it much easier."

Funeral services will be held for Temika today at Family Mortuary Chapel, 2310 Statesville Ave. at 2 p.m. Contributions to the Temika Foundation can be sent c/o NationsBank - NC2-172-01-0, PO Box 30120, Charlotte, N.C. 28230-5859 or call (704) 596-5859.

## Thousands married in stadium ceremony

By Alice Ann Love  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON - To Hanako Ikeno, it didn't seem strange to pledge herself in marriage Saturday to a foreign man she's known just a day in a football-field ceremony surrounded by 28,000 couples.

More than 20 years ago, the marriage of the 19-year-old's mother and father also was arranged by the Rev. and Mrs. Sun Myung Moon, founders of the Unification Church.

"I'm thankful that God could pick my spouse. I trust him more than anybody else. More than myself," said Ikeno, who grew up

in Milwaukee.

As she and 19-year-old Keichi Kaneko, the Japanese man picked by the Moons to be her husband, took vows Saturday in preparation for their marriage, her parents watched from the stands of Robert F. Kennedy Stadium and renewed their own wedding promises.

In all, 28,000 couples - most long married and 2,500 newly matched - paid \$70 each to take part in Saturday's marriage affirmation ceremony sponsored by the Unification Church, which believes cross-cultural match-making will help unite the world.

The real weddings come later in separate legal ceremonies.

"We want to create God-centered families that will serve as examples of true love," said Moon.

Ranks of new brides and grooms in long white dresses and dark suits took up two-thirds of the football field once used by the Washington Redskins. They were sprinkled with holy water, took vows to be married and raise families in the church, and exchanged rings under a gray November sky.

After the morning ceremony presided over by the Moons, the couples shared box lunches. Married couples renewing their vows did not have to belong to the Unification Church and organizers promoted the event - called "Blessing '97" - as a non-denomi-

national celebration of marriage and family. Nation of Islam leader Minister Louis Farrakhan also attended.

Blessing '97 followed a week of festivities billed by Unification Church as "World Culture and Sports Festival," a title that may have confused some celebrities invited to participate.

Whitney Houston, who had top-billing in a concert for a reported \$1 million salary following Saturday's blessing ceremony, canceled at the last minute, citing sudden illness.

About a dozen picketers protesting the event

Alabama ministers angry  
Rejection of gift unfair, group says

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

TAMPA, Fla. - Pastors and deacons of Alabama churches that burned two years ago say the Rev. Henry J. Lyons, president of the National Baptist Convention U.S.A. Inc., betrayed their trust.

A year ago, Lyons accepted a check for \$225,000 from the Anti-Defamation League and the National Urban League. Two weeks later the St. Petersburg minister wrote the Anti-Defamation League, saying six Alabama churches had been given \$35,000 each to help rebuild.

But most of the money was never distributed. After The Tampa Tribune reported the status of the funds two months ago, Lyons returned most of the money to the Anti-Defamation League.



Lyons

"A liar is a liar," the Rev. John Alexander told The Tribune in a Sunday story. "If you tell one lie, you have to make up another to make it fit."

Lyons said the letter was mailed by mistake and that all the money wasn't given out because he decided that some of the churches really didn't need the help. But four of the six churches still need to build or complete improvements, the Tribune reported.

Investigators with the Alabama Attorney General's Office have questioned the pastors about whether they received any money from Lyons, who remains under investigation by federal and Florida officials examining his financial dealings.

While the investigations continue, the tiny congregations of the unfinished churches struggle to raise more money. Any insurance money was spent long ago. Donations that poured in while the burnings received national focus have long since dried up.

As Lyons paid big money for a waterfront house, a Nevada time share, jewelry and fancy cars, the Alabama churchgoers - many on fixed incomes or earning minimum wage - say they raised cash through weekly church donations and fried chicken dinner socials.

Lyons, who claims to represent 8.5 million black Baptists, has come under criticism lately for alleged misuse of church money and for his dealings with Bernice Edwards, a convicted embezzler with whom he owned the waterfront home. Several ministers orchestrated a failed effort this summer to remove him as head of the Baptist group.

Pastors and church officials agree that the money Lyons said he gave but didn't would have gone a long way toward completing the work.