

After last month's newsletter went out, someone suggested that in the next newsletter we include a picture of Cec as a child. The best we could do was a picture of Cec as a young man.

Holiday Struggles

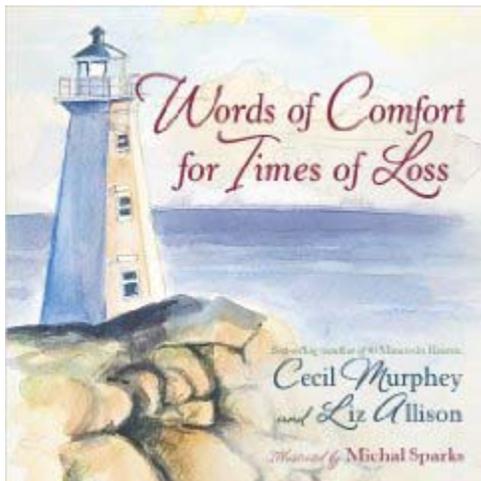
"But our family always celebrates on Christmas Eve," Ann insisted. "That's the way we've always done it." She explained that her three siblings, who lived in different cities, had already made travel plans. "And Christmas is the only time I get to see my baby brother because he lives so far away from us."

Curtis shook his head. "That's the problem. Christmas Eve is when my family does our big celebration. Our tradition goes back to the time when my grandfather was a boy during the Great Depression. . ." For perhaps a minute he explained the plans his side of the family had already made to come together.

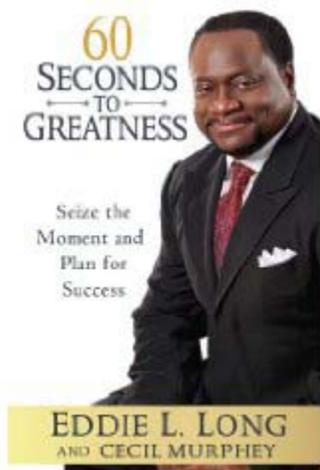
"We don't know what to do," Ann said. The couple had married six months earlier when Christmas was far from their thoughts. "Everything else in our lives seems settled except this."

At the time, I was their pastor and I had heard the story before. How could they possibly please both sides of the family? Neither of them thought about the family conflict until the middle of November.

"Now what are we going to do?" Curtis said. "I don't want to hurt my parents and Ann doesn't want to disappoint hers." As he explained, both families planned a big meal and celebration on Christmas Eve. The one factor that differed was that Ann's family met at 5:30 and Curtis's didn't start until 7:00.



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They resolved the immediate crisis by going to Ann's family, eating a big dinner and leaving a few minutes after seven. They arrived late for Curtis's family gathering. They groaned over having to eat two huge meals.

"We've got to do something different next year," Ann said.

"Yeah, I wish we'd thought about it before." They decided to talk to both families to see if they could figure out something so they wouldn't get caught in such a bind the next year.

Just before they left, Curtis asked me, "Did you ever have that problem in your family?"

I smiled because we hadn't encountered that problem. By the time our children reached the marriage stage, I figured out that the holy season was a time of good cheer and happiness but it could also become a time of stress, especially when it came to family traditions.

After our oldest child, Wanda, married, we told her and her siblings that we had made one decision about observing the holiday period. "Go to your in-laws first. Honor their tradition. We'll take the left-over time."

By the time all three of our children married, it gave them hassle-free permission to take care of their in-law obligations first. For us, it meant that some years we've celebrated Christmas three days early or two days late.

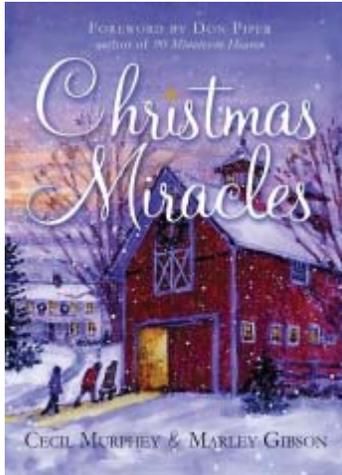
A few times I felt lonely on Christmas Day, wishing we had gotten together as we had when they were children. I reminded myself, "Nobody knows exactly when Jesus was born. So does a specific day on the calendar make a difference?" Even without that reminder, I knew we had done the right thing because it avoided forcing our children to decide which side of the family to please. That decision has worked for

thirty plus years.

Sometimes I do things right. That was one of those times.

PERSONAL NEWS

- I've been at home for about a month. Except for a quick trip for interviews in Toronto, I'll stay in the Atlanta area until February.
- [Words of Comfort for Times of Loss](#), which I wrote with Liz Allison, reaches bookstores the first of the year.
- My book with Bishop Eddie Long, [60 Seconds to Greatness](#) comes out in January.
- My 4th book with [Don Piper](#) will release sometime next year. It's called *Heaven Bound: Jesus' Departing Instructions for the Life Ahead*.
- This week I received the Italian translation of [90 Minutes in Heaven](#). I've lost track, but I think it's now been translated into about 40 languages.



Christmas Miracles is a great gift for teachers, pastors, the mailman, Aunt Mabel, and your hospitalized neighbor. It's full of true, heart-warming stories of God at work.

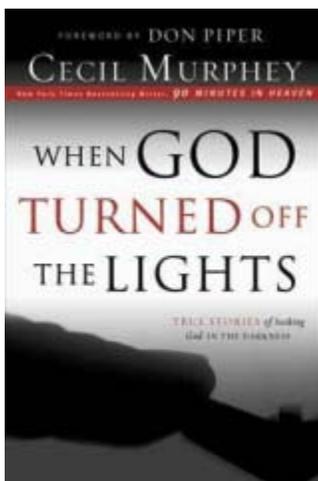
The Twila Zone—Words from my assistant, Twila Belk

If you need a gift for a teacher or a hostess or you want to have a few extra gifts on hand at Christmas, consider buying several copies of Cec's beautiful new book, [Christmas Miracles](#). The stories in the book serve as wonderful reminders that God answers prayer, even in some of the most desperate situations. Here are a couple of stories from [Christmas Miracles](#) for your enjoyment:

[Miracle of the Nativity](#)

[Sean's Question](#)

The Knight Agency is throwing a special holiday shindig for [Christmas Miracles](#) on



Are you going through a dark period in your life right now? This book might offer you the help you need.

December 17th at 9 pm ET. Everyone is invited to join Cec, his co-author Marley Gibson, and several of the contributors (including me) in [The Knight Agency chat room](#) for book conversation, trivia, and giveaways.

Are you on Facebook? Check out the pages for [Christmas Miracles](#) and [When Someone You Love Has Cancer](#). For those of you not on Facebook, you might appreciate the [Christmas Miracles](#) and [When Someone You Love Has Cancer](#) blogs.

This is the time of year that is associated with lots of light—Christmas tree lights, candles, stars, the Light of the world. But what about those who are going into the holiday season feeling as if God has turned off the lights? If that is you or a friend of yours, you might find a few suggestions to help in Cec's book [When God Turned off the Lights](#).

I want to tell you about [Words of Comfort for Times of Loss](#) that Cec co-authored with Liz Allison. Because of their personal losses, Cec and Liz share their insight with others who are going through uncertainty, depression, and loneliness after losing a loved one. They also offer advice for those comforting someone who is grieving. The book has soothing watercolor paintings by artist Michal Sparks and can be a special gift for loved ones dealing with loss.

Contact me with any Cec-related questions at twila@gottatellsomebody.com or 563-332-1622.



Twila says, "Merry Christmas! May your holiday season be filled with joy, peace, and hope in abundance."