

# THE FREEDOM BULLETIN

A Freedom Fellowships Newsletter

DECEMBER 2021

## Welcome to the 2021

### Freedom Fellowships Christmas Gala!

Thank you for choosing to spend an evening of teaching and music with us. Grab yourself some refreshments located in the Cafe area and main assembly room and get ready to join in on the festivities. Events start at 6 p.m. Here's what you can expect for the evening:

- Teaching by Senior Elder Keith McCallum
- Sing-along Christmas songs with the Freedom Fellowships Holiday Chorus
- Children's song and dance number: "Go Tell it on the Mountain" led by Ericka Smith
- Rock & Roll Christmas with the Puddle Squids
- Late-night dance party with DJ Maxx

## Upcoming Events

### Freedom Fellowships Christmas Gala

12/11 @ 6 p.m.

### Kids and Family New Year's Eve party

12/31 @ 5 — 8 p.m.

### Identity Project college New Year's Eve party

12/31 @ 8 p.m.

### Basic Christianity Class

Spring 2022

### LTC 2

Spring 2022

### Church History Class (For LTC graduates)

TBD

## What's inside

### The Unexcogitable Christmas

by Alex Herbers

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by Elli Rozler

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## Announcements

### No CT:

12/25 (Christmas)

1/1 (New Year's Day)



# The **UNEXCOGITABLE** Christmas

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By Alex Herbers

**What a silly word “unexcogitable” is.** It means “not capable of being thought out or contrived.” (It’s almost self-defining that way.) However, if Christmas really is the celebration of God’s coming to earth in the form of a human infant, then “unexcogitable” is a good word to use.

This will not be a normal “Tinsel and Tidings” kind of Christmas reflection but, in the spirit of Christmas, I encourage you to stop and take some time to consider who Jesus actually is and what his existence means.

## **Christmas is the celebration of the birth of Jesus.**

We know the human version of the Son of God as “Jesus Christ.” Particularly around Christmas we think of Jesus Christ (if we think of him at all) like Ricky Bobby in Talladega Nights: “8lb 6oz newborn infant Jesus, don’t even know a word yet, so cuddly but still omnipotent.”

Now, that’s funny. And it’s not wrong: he was a baby – but it’s far from the complete picture.

If we stop at “baby Jesus” or even “peaceful shepherd Jesus” in our thinking of him, we miss so much of who and what Jesus Christ is and how we ought to live as a result.

## **What is Jesus?**

If we think about Jesus, we tend to start with a human – Jesus, a carpenter from Nazareth – and duct tape supernatural abilities to him, sort of like a superhero. That’s an understandable starting point, but not the most

helpful one, because God is far more different and alien to us than he is like us.

Isaiah 40 gives us a powerful description: compared to God, *“the nations are like a drop from a bucket ... He lifts up the islands like fine dust. Even Lebanon is not enough to burn, nor its animals enough for a burnt offering ... To whom then will you liken God? ... The Everlasting God ... does not become weary or tired. His understanding is unsearchable.”*

We do well to begin our understanding of God as the bizarre, alien, unexcogitable Other that he truly is. How can it be that God, with all those incomprehensible and powerful attributes, as John 1:14 says, “became flesh, and dwelt among us?” The God-Man!

Other questions follow: “How can we be created in the image of such a being? Is it even possible to know such a God? If so, how?”

As we explore what God has told us about himself and his Son, we come to even more confusing and awe-inspiring truths. This all-powerful Other is not just a “force,” but a person. This person has communicated to us. He is searching to find us. Such

finding will result in our salvation from every human problem due to the unmerited, loving actions of this God because he, despite his incomprehensible nature, loves us.

Isaiah 40 also describes God's actions toward those who follow him:

<sup>29</sup> *He gives strength to the weary,  
And to the one who lacks  
might He increases power.*

<sup>30</sup> *Though youths grow weary  
and tired,  
And vigorous young men  
stumble badly,*

<sup>31</sup> *Yet those who wait for the Lord  
Will gain new strength;  
They will mount up with  
wings like eagles,  
They will run and not get tired,  
They will walk and not  
become weary.*

God's nature and his love of us ought to intrude on our hearts and minds and spur us on to seek him out for salvation and for life with him, based not on terror or guilt but on unfathomable gratitude.

Many of us have time off from our normal schedule around Christmas. All of us will fill that time with something. Family, presents, reading, games, shopping, watching, traveling. Those things are all well and good but, if I may make a suggestion: add some "nothing" to that list. Make empty time this Christmas season. Turn off the TV or podcasts. Take a walk or a drive in silence. Think and ask: what does Jesus Christ mean for your life? What is he saying to you? Are you willing to listen to him?

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# REVAMPED & READY

BY ELLI ROZLER

## for the next generation

**A**n important part of God's plan throughout the Bible involves passing on the things of God to the next generation. Which is why Freedom Fellowships is pleased to see the ministry for our kids, Oasis, revamped and ready to serve the little children better than ever.

When Freedom Fellowships got a building, one of the biggest changes that happened immediately was that it provided a place for all of the Freedom Fellowships kids to call home. Oasis, Freedom Fellowships' children's ministry, has been through a lot of strange circumstances over the years. As more kids came, the leaders had to get really creative with where to put them when there was no building of our own. During Central Teaching times, this would look like Kent State classrooms, college apartments, parks, homes of people close by or the Christian Life Center. Parents would drop their kids off at multiple locations, rush to CT, then rush to go collect them after.

Now, Oasis looks completely different—praise God! With the converted classrooms, the kids and volunteers have their own, safe, fun spaces to look forward to. And parents don't have to get a workout in to gather their children every Saturday after CT.

The building has not only provided a stable, safer environment for kids, but it has also expanded their ability to learn about God, get encouragement from older believers and encourage new people bringing their kids for the first time.

Danielle Kyle and Ericka Smith have recently revamped the Oasis Ministry (which includes infants to 5th graders). These two have been so hard at work organizing the new rooms, gathering supplies, managing teaching rotations for four classrooms, training volunteers and overseeing the 97 people who volunteer their time to serve the kids in Freedom Fellowships!

Just last month they had a worker's meeting going over classroom procedures and organizing volunteers to get CPR certified. They have done amazing work, and they aren't finished. These women have continued to equip volunteers



with classroom management and teaching tips. They also hope to incorporate collective music time in the ministry as well as a digital check-in!

Chris Baker also plans on installing a playground in Spring 2022 that the kids can use during warmer weather at CT!

“Our Oasis ministry isn’t just glorified child care ... Our Body of Christ has an amazing opportunity to play a role in discipling our children, especially in those first really influential years,” Danielle said.

“We’re laying the foundation for the next generation of believers! Makes me think of Proverbs 22:6, ‘Train up a child in the way he should go, even when he grows older he will not abandon it.’”

Please pray for Oasis: for the children to follow the Lord, for the volunteers who teach kids weekly, for the playground funds

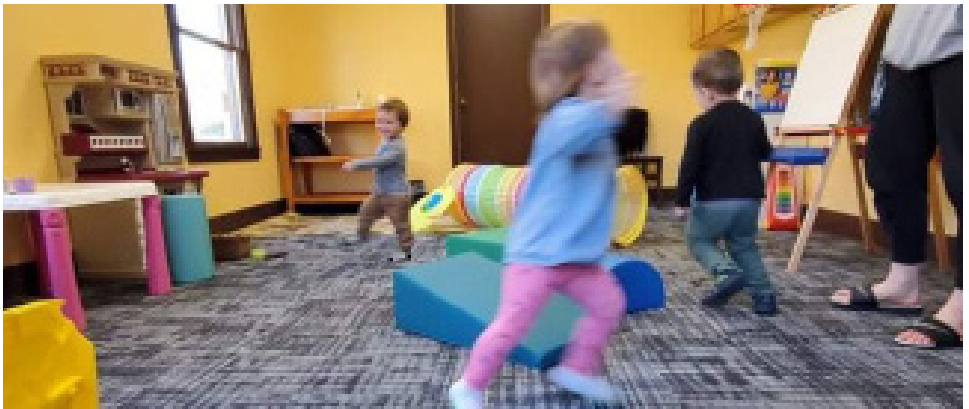
and for the future. This is a great start for many kids to come. Parents and future parents are

“Train up a child in the way he should go, even when he grows older he will not abandon it.”

#### PROVERBS 22:6

so thankful to have this reliable resource for their children.

If you see Danielle and Ericka, be sure to thank them for their hard work making Oasis a fun place where the next generation can learn about Jesus! And bring your kids and invite your friends with children!



# REACHING OUT WITH RESTORATION

By *Megan Smalley*

Dozens of members of Freedom Fellowships have volunteered annually at the Joni & Friends camps that serve families affected by disability by providing them with a week of rest. Many people who volunteer at Joni & Friends return with a conviction to serve those with disabilities here at home.

Jamie Bell, a member of the Fusion fellowship group, had that conviction after she returned from Joni & Friends a few years ago.

“I came back from my first Joni & Friends and thought that this needed to happen more than once a year,” she said.

Bell wasn’t alone in her conviction. Carlell Howard, also of Fusion fellowship group, and Ted Howell, a member of Phoenix fellowship group, had similar convictions a few years ago.

“The conviction comes from the desire to extend our experience with Joni & Friends,” Ted said. “We can love these special needs kids and families on a more ongoing basis versus just one week in the summer.”

Unified by this same conviction, these three teamed to start a respite ministry at Freedom Fellowships about two years ago. The word “respite” means to rest or restore. Within the disability community, a “respite” is a program that serves those with disabilities while giving the parents or caregivers a time for rest and relief.

“The goal of respite is giving rest and restoration to families,” Carlell said. “With our respite, we wanted parents to get rest and restored from their sometimes hard duties of parenting

kids with disabilities. And for the kids, it’s for having someone to be their friend, to bond and encourage them, even share about God’s grace.”

When Jamie, Carlell and Ted first partnered to start this ministry for Freedom Fellowships, the church did not have its own building. So, they reached out to another church in the Kent community to discuss using their facilities for this ministry.

However, in the spring of 2020, COVID-19 took its toll as the world shut down. Plans for a respite ministry paused.

But when Freedom Fellowships bought its building in Kent this summer, Ted saw an opportunity to host a respite program at the new building. Ted, Jamie and Carlell discussed this idea with the church elders, and without much questioning, they said the elders gave them the greenlight to start a respite ministry.

“With our own building, there was flexibility for this ministry. It was a much easier process than before,” Carlell said.

This past fall, these three workers rounded up more than 20 volunteers from both the Phoenix and Fusion fellowship groups to commit to this service ministry. Volunteers are

involved in a variety of roles: setup and cleanup; a coffee shop crew to serve the parents; a check-in crew; a team of people to help with crafts and activities; a team of people to teach Bible lessons; and volunteers dedicated to be buddies to the kids who attend. During the respite, children who come are paired with buddies who listen to them and help them with activities.

The first respite ministry day kicked off Saturday, Dec. 4 from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Freedom Fellowships Study Center. Two families took their kids to the respite and 18 volunteers helped.

The respite ministry leadership team said the first respite was a big success.

“A couple of volunteers were nervous to be buddies with these kids, but you could see the volunteers’ fears melt away as they served,” Jamie said. “And the moms served by this were so excited coming back to pick up their kids since they were rejuvenated from the time of rest. This is what we wanted: for the kids to have fun and want to come back and for the parents to be rejuvenated.”

The respite ministry plans to host one respite on a Saturday each month during the school year, and it will be focused on serving local families who have kids with disabilities ages 12 and under. Long-term, the respite ministry team hopes to have more people from the community bring their kids to the Saturday respites and that it can ultimately be used as an evangelistic tool to reach out to

parents who do not know the Lord. The volunteers hope to serve those in and around the Kent community who are affected by disability.

The respite ministry team said they will not need additional volunteers currently, but they want to encourage all of Freedom Fellowships to spread the word about this new ministry with family and friends who have kids with disabilities.

“We know God has a heart for people with disabilities—and it’s one of the most unreached people groups in the world,” Jamie said. “We’re called as a church to go out and love, including the disabled!”

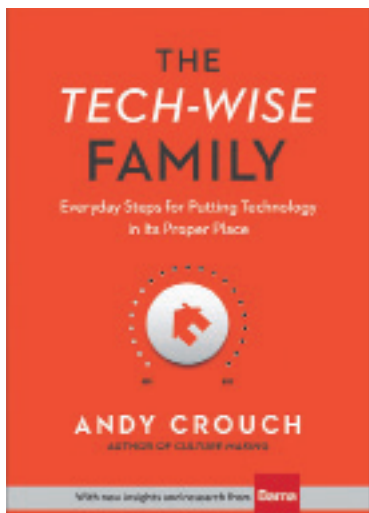
For more details about upcoming dates for the respite ministry, contact Ted, Carlell or Jamie.



Book of the Month:

## The Tech-Wise Family by Andy Crouch

Review by *Kyle McCallum*



**H**ave you thought about what screen time is doing to you or your kids? In today's digital world we are surrounded by technology and endless instant entertainment that can rob us and our families of opportunities to relate. In his book "The Tech-Wise Family," author Andy Crouch lays out principles he implemented within his own family to maximize relationship building in the face of the digital age.

He lays out 10 commitments for tech-wise families that he applies in his own family, including the creation of creative spaces in the home free of the distraction of screens, using screens purposefully instead of using them to pass the time aimlessly, and being purposeful about conversation time instead of screen time in the car for example.

As a new father myself, I found the book to be an excellent resource for thinking purposefully about my family's time together. I began to be more intentional about my use of technology in the home and have limited my use of screens so that my daughters grow up valuing face-to-face relational time over screen time.

The book is free if you subscribe to the Kindle Unlimited service, or you could come to the Study Center and read the copy we have here!



## Freedom Fellowships

*It was for freedom that Christ set us free*

### CONTACT

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### MEETING TIMES

Saturday 4:00 p.m., 6:00 p.m.  
500 VFW Pkwy, Kent, OH 44240

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