

Who would have thought?



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Christmas is a season full of surprises. Sure, there are the obvious ones—presents, cards, telephone calls and visits from family and friends last heard from a year ago. But what about what *really* lies behind the season? What if there is actually more to this time of year than the warm fuzzies found in twinkling Christmas trees and well-known yuletide melodies?

In *Who would have thought?* author Chuck Strohacker uses a devotional style a little less traditional to convey the true meaning behind Christmas. Blending real-life situations, engaging anecdotes, personal observations, and homespun witticisms, he warmly shares how good the news is about Christmas. It's not about what we give each other; it's about what God gave us—and how that gift can transform our lives from this day forward.

The world has long tried to bury the magnificence of the Christmas story—so much so that many today have forgotten or minimized the significance of the season to nothing more than a few days of vacation and some gift swapping. Strohacker takes the *spin* off the season and steadies it for a closer—more realistic—look. Casting light on the unparalleled marvel of God's love as shown in the birth of His Son, he ponders a love so powerful, so intentional, as to forsake heaven and come down to earth. Such a love is without equal and beyond comprehension.

The glitz and dazzle of Christmas can overload our senses and numb our perceptions, but it cannot diminish what took place 2,000 years ago in a tiny Judean hamlet. For *that* event transcends time. Truly, *who would have thought* the real meaning behind Christmas wasn't the hoopla and parties—but Jesus—who came that we might "have life and have it abundantly" (John 10:10b).

Day 1

“Having Things Our Own Way”

TEXT: Isaiah 53:6 - We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

When I was invited to do these reflections, my first question was this: “Do you have a theme or a set of Bible texts you want me to use?” I was told I’d have a free hand in choosing the theme, direction, and texts.

While this freedom at first sounded good, I soon found myself wondering what if I miss the mark? This feeling I had was something unexpected. You would think in this day and age of wanting what we want, when we want it, and the way we want it, this lack of constraints might be appealing. It wasn’t.

I read the appointed Bible texts for this time of year—the days before Christmas—and prayed. I also found myself reading Isaiah 53, a chapter telling about God’s plan for our salvation.

We are, like everyone who has come before us, just like sheep—each of us turning to our own way or—as I prefer to say it, “wanting our own way.”

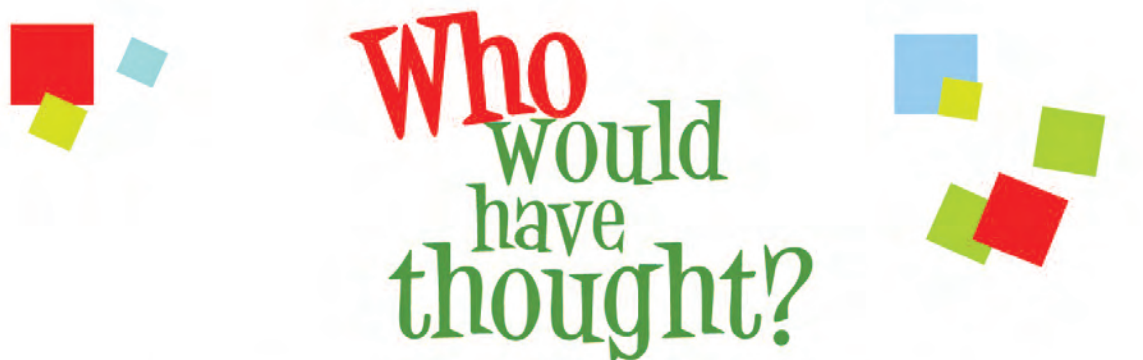
As we read the Bible verses I’ve chosen for these days before Christmas, we will meet a lot of folks who wanted everything their own way. But that’s not how the journey plays out. We will come across many people and situations that don’t fit our expectations, and we will discover God’s unexpected and, at times, inexplicable way of working things out for our good and for our salvation.

The thing that tops the list is that “the LORD has laid on Him (Jesus) the iniquity of us all.”

At times, do you have difficulty turning things over to someone else?

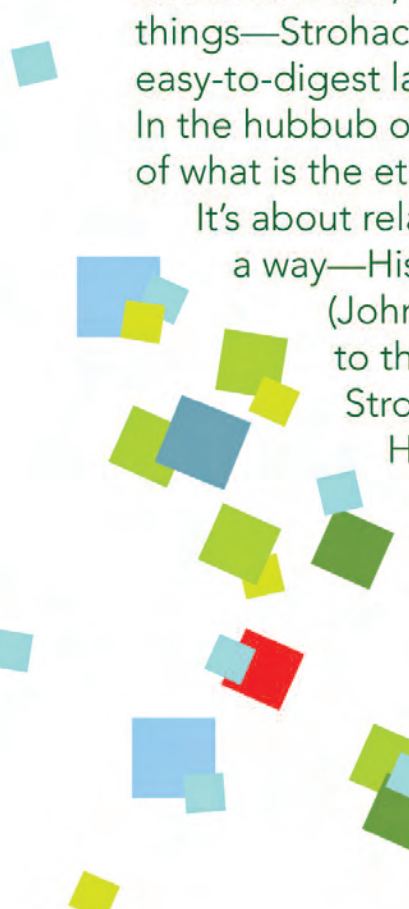
Are you that “hands-on” type of person?

THE PRAYER: Lord, open my mind and heart these coming days to hear what You have to say to me. God, help me to understand what Jesus, the baby of Bethlehem, has done for us. Amen.



Who would have thought?

With stories, anecdotes, observations, and insight, author and Lutheran educator Chuck Strohacker takes a fresh look at a 2,000-year-old story. Lessons learned from the classroom or in life have a way of teaching and making their points—sometimes in unexpected ways. In *Who would have thought?* he uses life's circumstances and situations to engage the reader in a friendly and familiar style. Throughout these devotions he shows readers how the miraculous grace of God was shown the world through the life and death of His Son, Jesus Christ.



Touching on family Christmas customs, classroom remembrances, and his hobbies—to name but a few things—Strohacker presents in conversational and easy-to-digest language the far-reaching love of God. In the hubbub of Christmas, it's easy to lose sight of what is the eternal significance of this holiday.

It's about relationship building—God providing a way—His Son, “the truth and the light” (John 14:6b)—so we might have access to the Father. “Who would have thought,” Strohacker asks, “that God would open His mercy and grace not only to His chosen people, Israel, but to the Gentiles as well?” Indeed, who would have thought?



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