



# The Mailer

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P.O. Box 125 ♦ Kingsville, MD 21087 ♦ (410) 592-2700  
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## **Blessed Intrusion: The Inconvenient Christ**

“Gabriel” came to Solvita and me two months ago, disguised as a little \$2 test kit purchased from the local pharmacy (I write, of course, with tongue in cheek!). The “announcement” that evening changed our lives forever: “husband and wife” had become “father and mother”.

On the one hand, this discovery shouldn't have been a big surprise. On the other hand, in our minds the timing of the pregnancy couldn't have been *worse!* We had an agenda for our lives that did *not* include children right away. We were enjoying being just the two of us, living and working together in the ministry. What's more, we were just one week from traveling to India...enough said. I write with complete honesty (and a good deal of shame) that many of my initial reactions at the news were rooted in shock, and focused on the major *inconvenience* this was bringing into our lives. It took a definite choice on our part to accept the fact that God's timing is, indeed, perfect, and that this “intrusion” was (is) actually a wonderful *blessing* being given to us.

As you can imagine, my thoughts also turned to another pregnancy announcement, made over 2000 years ago. The Apostle Paul, years later, reflected on Christ's birth this way: “*when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son...*” (Galatians 4:4). The word translated “fullness” in this verse carries the meaning of “completeness”: everything that must be done has been done, and *now* is the *perfect* time to take action.

“Hindsight” being what it is, historians often expound on the perfections of God's plan: The Greeks had unified the world in language and culture, the Romans in law and transportation. The Jews were expecting a “Messiah”, a deliverer, to come soon. Indeed, could there have been a more perfect time?

Well, that depends on whom you ask! At least to me, it seems that God's “fullness of time” was quite inconvenient for most of the individuals involved.

Consider Mary and Joseph, for example. We actually know very little about them as people, save that they were as ordinary as you and I. But they were also *Jewish*, and to the Jews a pregnancy out of wedlock was terribly shameful, and potentially a capital offense.

The humility and surrender of their hearts, displayed by their willing acceptance of the circumstance, is remarkable. However, don't think that this sudden “change of plans” came without any trace of uncertainty or sense of great *inconvenience*. I am sure that neither of them, if asked beforehand, would have considered themselves “ready” for this! Indeed, until an angel intervened, Joseph considered breaking the engagement completely - a move as serious as divorce in those days. Wouldn't you have done the same, if your fiancée confided in you that she was pregnant - and you knew it wasn't *your* baby?

Mary's conception and pregnancy were anything but “convenient”. But then, can you imagine, being nine months pregnant, suddenly needing to make a long journey on the back of a donkey? And when they arrived, the “little town of Bethlehem” was anything but “lying still”. Because of the census the town was flooded with visitors, and all the usual places to stay were completely full. Not the time to be looking for a hotel room much less a maternity suite!

Thus, the Son of God had to be born in the only available alternative - a barn, with a feed trough as His crib. Need I say more about sanitation and comforts for mother and child? And who attended Mary as she delivered? Was Joseph alone, functioning both as husband, father and “mid-wife”?

As I considered all these things, I began to see in them illustrations of a much larger principle: When Christ comes into *our* world, though He does so in perfect accord with His divine plan and timing, it nevertheless is often perceived by us to be an “intrusion”. He is, in that sense, not “convenient”.

We can sense this “inconvenience”, perhaps even most profoundly, at the beginning of our Christian experience. I recognize that each of us has our own unique story of how we came to Christ, and this story is precious to us. However, the Scriptures clearly teach that no one, on their own, seeks after God. Why not? Because we are too busy seeking after ourselves! In our natural state, even our “religious” pursuits and enterprises are, at their root, idolatrous. Our goal is not the glory of God but the attempt to manipulate Him to fulfill our desires and expectations. This is human nature, in all its raw depravity.

This is why the Scriptures emphatically teach that for a man, woman or child to come to Christ, He, in fact, must first come to them. When God sovereignly

works in this way, this blessed awakening is also accompanied by a very real confrontation, for we must, contrary to nature, recognize His lordship over us. For some of us, this was not a difficult process. For others, the struggle was prolonged. For all of us, though, to one degree or another it was very real. To our flesh, the demands of Christ are perceived to be a horrible “intrusion” and “inconvenience”, for they cut directly against our nature.

I wish I could say that the struggles stopped there, but they don't. Those who have surrendered to the lordship of Christ and have been converted, like it or not, are still *human*. Thus, we still have our plans, desires and expectations, which at times are very hard to relinquish. I doubt that there is a saint who ever lived that was not, at some point, confronted with a severe choice, a battle of the wills. When Christ said, “deny yourself, and take up your cross *daily*, and follow Me” (Luke 9:23, paraphrased, emphasis added), it was not only a one time event that He was referring to.

Could anything be more intrusive, more inconvenient, than a cross?

The “cross” we must bear may take on many different forms. The Lord might call us to a place or a task that would be the furthest thing from what we would naturally desire. Perhaps it is physical sickness or weakness. Maybe it's economic disaster, or watching our dreams crumble. It could even be the “drudgery of the daily grind”. Whatever it is, I dare say that though we may humbly accept His yoke, we often still chafe under it. It takes a definite choice for us to accept the fact that His “yoke is easy”, and His “burden is light”.

But, my friends, let us not forget that just as the coming of the Christ-child into the world was according to God's perfect time and plan, so too is it when He comes into and works in our lives. And this I can guarantee: when we get to heaven, and our “hindsight” is perfect, we will look on all these “intrusions” and “inconveniences” and see them to be the rich blessings that they are.

“Blessed be the LORD God...Who only does wondrous things!” (Psalm 72:18)

With Heartfelt Christmas Blessings,



Stephen P. Tecklenberg  
President / Executive Director

If you would like to listen to the sermon that formed the basis of this article,  
you are invited to go to:

[www.enmonline.org/Audiomenu.htm](http://www.enmonline.org/Audiomenu.htm)

## Ministry Report

**India** - From November 9 to December 12, *Steve and Solvita Tecklenberg* were privileged to live and work with the community at Jubilee Memorial Bible College (JMBC) in Chennai, south India.



Steve teaching

The primary goal of this ministry was to teach two courses, “*Biblical Archaeology*” and “*Principles of Worship, Preaching, and Church Music*”. Steve taught both of these courses to the Bachelor of Theology (B.Th.) students, numbering in total about 20 individuals, and representing a cross section of the many regions and cultures within India.

In addition to teaching these courses, Steve had many opportunities to speak at Sunday services, morning chapels, and other community-wide training sessions. In many of them, he focused on principles of ministry, including “*Two Things To Never Forget*”, our absolute dependency on God and the centrality of Christ in ministry. (This message, and others, will soon be available for streaming online.)



Solvita shares in the girls' hostel

Solvita as well, despite being in the early stages of her pregnancy, was able to participate with Steve in his teaching, and also to have some sessions of her own. These included meetings with the campus girls, and also teaching an English class.

Both Steve and Solvita were warmly welcomed at JMBC, and were able to enter into life there with joy. The campus ladies especially reached out and befriended Solvita, helping her in her physical discomfort. We thank God for His goodness, and trust that they, too, were blessed by the ministry there.



Steve and Solvita with their students



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wishes you...



A Merry Christmas And A Happy New Year!