

LIFTED MAGAZINE

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December 2006 / January 2007

VIENNA

Find the Christmas Spirit
in Austria

Also Inside:

Still looking for Christmas
gifts? Look no further than
our 2006 Gift Guide

Joanie Laurer sits down with
our own Andrew Moreno

Don't overlook those
blessings in disguise

Protect yourself with
relationship boundaries

LIFTED MAGAZINE

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Letter from the Editor



Well, the year is almost over and what a year it's been. Personally, I have had many, many changes and blessings in my life and fortunately not much tragedy. In addition to our new puppy, my husband and I have just bought our first home together and he has also started a new job which he loves.

At Lifted, we weren't quite as blessed in our attempt to launch our print edition, but as our Faith article discusses, sometimes what seems like a failure is often a blessing in disguise when you have the hindsight later on. I now know that had I tried to launch the print edition, I wouldn't have had time for any of the other changes which were taking place and about to take place in my life.

I'm not really one to make New Year's resolutions. If I do happen to make them, I tend to forget about them completely a few weeks later. But what I do instead is set goals for myself all along the week, month, year and so on. These continuous resolutions are frequently updated but always kept in mind, even if they're on my daily To Do list. Sometime the structure of just putting something into writing can be enough motivation to actually get you going and is the first step in achieving those goals.

Thanks to all who have supported this magazine in the past year. I couldn't have done it without you...and I really do mean that. You have all blessed me more than I can possibly describe.

Tiffany Simpson
Editor-in-Chief

P.S. Always wanted to be a writer but never received the chance to make the dream a reality? We're still looking for writers so please contact us or visit our Jobs section on www.liftedmagazine.com for more details.

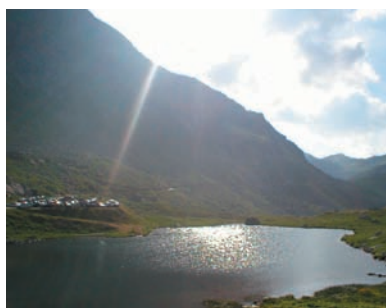
My Top Picks From This Issue of Lifted Magazine



Christmas Gift Guide

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I guess you could say I'm a bit of a sucker when it comes to the holidays but it's just such a magical time of the year that I can't help myself. No, I wasn't always this way - especially not while working in retail...but lately the holidays just get better and better.



Vienna

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Vienna is a wonderful city to visit at any time of the year but during Christmas and New Years it truly comes alive. Everyone is caught up in the holiday spirit and it's a city that really seems to thrive on the true feelings of Christmas like love, family and togetherness.

LIFTED MAGAZINE

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National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation **The Ultimate Christmas Movie** by Kelly McGuire

Christmas is almost upon us once more and, as always, it's the one time of year we can really enjoy the company of our friends and family and celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ. It's also a time for overindulging on mum's home cooking, exchanging presents and maybe even settling down in front of the TV to watch the Christmas classics. For some, the ultimate Christmas movie is Frank Capra's thought-provoking *It's a Wonderful Life* or the feel-good *Miracle on 34th Street*. As for me, you can't get any better than the wonderfully hilarious and often cringe-worthy *National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation*.

The holiday season is just around the corner and this year Clark Griswold (played by **Chevy Chase**) plans to give his family the best Christmas vacation they have ever known. He has dreams of a picturesque Christmas tree adorning his living room, a house so beautifully decorated it would make his neighbours jealous, a huge family banquet where all can eat, drink and be merry to their hearts' content, and building a swimming pool in the back garden with his Christmas bonus. Of course, his good old-fashioned family Christmas doesn't go quite as he'd planned. And when things go wrong for the Griswolds, they go spectacularly wrong. Christmas trees going up in flames, overcooked turkeys and family members turning up unexpectedly at the doorstep are the least of Clark's worries. To top it all off, when the Christmas bonus that Clark has banked his hopes on fails to arrive, he decides to take matters into his own hands with hilarious results.

Christmas Vacation (1989) is the third in the *National Lampoon's Vacation* series and anyone who has seen *Vacation* or *European Vacation* will know what to expect. For those of you who don't, if movies where everything that can go wrong will go wrong are not your thing, then perhaps this isn't a movie for you. If you're willing to risk it, however, you'll find that *Christmas Vacation* is a deliciously fun movie which brings the idealised Christmas gatherings of other movies into a painfully realistic light. Whether it's the stereotyped bored and disillusioned teenager (as

portrayed by a young **Juliette Lewis**), the two sets of parents-in-law who argue over each and every minor detail or that strange cousin Eddie that no one wants to talk about (as portrayed by **Randy Quaid**), you'll be bound to find something in the movie that you can identify with.

Chevy Chase, who plays main man Clark Griswold, is as delightful as ever. His dynamic personality lights up the screen and it becomes almost impossible to tear your eyes away, no matter how badly things are going wrong. While Chase has played a variety of roles throughout his movie career, I feel that Clark Griswold is perhaps one of his most memorable characters, a role that he has truly made his own. **Beverly D'Angelo** returns once more as Ellen Griswold, Clark's long-suffering and devoted wife. It's hard to deny the on-screen chemistry that exists between this dysfunctional but loveable duo and Chase and D'Angelo play off each other so well that it's a shame they haven't worked together more. Despite the myriad of dilemmas their family faces, Clark and Ellen continue to rely and depend on each other in a way that seems almost rare in modern-day relationships. Other honourable mentions go to Randy Quaid, who plays Clark's Cousin Eddie, whose uncouth behaviour brings Clark to the edge of utter despair.

While the catastrophic mishaps and misadventures of the Griswold family are what really captures the audience's attention, *Christmas Vacation* has an underlying message which is often overlooked. Behind his bumbling and sometimes manic persona, Clark Griswold is a man with a noble cause: to make Christmas a memorable holiday season for the entire family. He is the one person in the movie who truly embodies the Christmas spirit, albeit in a highly unconventional guise, and his determination to succeed at his goal, against all odds, is an admirable trait. In recent years, Christmas has become a day associated with consumerism and materialistic ideals so it is refreshing and truly wonderful to see someone who still believes in the true meaning of Christmas: family.

Did You Know...?

- *Christmas Vacation* (1989) is the third movie in the 'National Lampoon's Vacation' series. The movie was preceded by *Vacation* (1983) and *European Vacation* (1985) and was succeeded some eight years later by *Vegas Vacation* (1997).

- *Christmas Vacation* was one of actress and singer Juliette Lewis's first major movie appearances. Juliette went on to star in *Natural Born Killers* (1994) and *From Dusk Till Dawn* (1996), alongside George Clooney and Quentin Tarantino.

- The late Mae Questal, who plays Clark's Aunt Bethany in the movie, was a renowned voice actress and was the voice of the iconic Betty Boop in over 150 animated shorts in the 1930s. Mae's other memorable roles include *Popeye's Olive Oyl* and *Casper the Friendly Ghost*.

- Clark and Eddie drink egg nog from 'Marty Moose' glasses. People will recognise this character from the first *Vacation* movie, *Vacation*.

- The movie Clark's son Russ is watching is Frank Capra's *It's a Wonderful Life*. Movie buffs should note that Capra's grandson, Frank Capra III, is the Assistant Director of *Christmas Vacation*.

It's Time to Make Movies We Love The 7th Annual Christian WYSIWYG Film Festival

by Andrew Moreno, Entertainment Writer & Sophia M. Papadopoulos, Contributing Writer

The 7th annual Christian WYSIWYG Film Festival occurred on October 17-21, 2006 in San Francisco, CA. WYSIWYG, which stands for "What you see is what you get" is the optimal title for this international film festival, encasing feature films, short films, documentaries, and animations. The content within the films centered on telling a story, with Christian undertones. This year's films included subjects like abortion, adoption, faith, finding one's purpose in life, the knowledge that all things are possible, the golden rule, and finding happiness.

Unique to the film festival was the "popcorn pitch party." Filmmakers, writers, and novices alike were able to pitch their projects to producers, directors, distributors and other industry leaders. This year's panelists included Jeff Varga, Director and special effects supervisor; James Burgess, Director and cinematographer; Bob Gurich, Vice president of Madacy Entertainment; Richard Gazowsky,

President of Christian WYSIWYG Filmworks; James Berkley, prophetic minister; and David Balsinger, Grizzly Adams Productions. In addition, there were workshops and networking opportunities for directors, actors and filmmakers.

The awards ceremony took place at WYSIWYG studio located on Treasure Island in San Francisco, California. The night began with a pre-dinner reception, where directors and writers mingled and discussed their films. After being served a lovely dinner, the awards were announced. A clip of the winning film was shown after the winner was announced, then the director, writer, or any person that was associated with the film was able to give his or her thanks to God and to address the audience.

Soulmate and *The Oath of Desormeau* rightly deserved to be two of the winners of this year's WYSIWYG film festival. *Soulmate* won Best Documentary, *The Oath of Desormeau* won Best Dramatic Film

and *Unexpected News* took home the award for Best Children's Film. Other winners included *The Light of a Candle: Remembering the Holocaust*, *Boy, Fruition*, and *El Evangelista*, just to name a few.

The ceremony ended with Richard Gazowsky, writer, director and President of WYSIWYG filmworks leaving the audience with the incite that if anyone has a dream or a story to tell, not to wait but to seize the day and begin its production promptly. His ardor for this message reiterated the night's theme, "It is time for us to create movies we love." This statement was motivating and inspiring and corroborated well with the mission of WYSIWYG, "To bring the presence of God to people all over the world through entertainment."

For more information about WYSIWYG Film works, the 2006 film festival or next year's festival, visit www.wysiygfilmworks.com.

During the festival we had the opportunity to view 50 films but three in particular grabbed our attention...

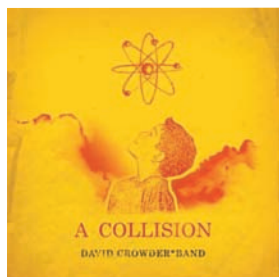
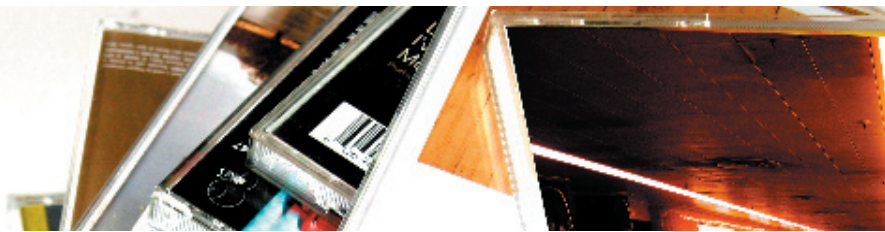
Soulmate (www.soulmatefilm.com) was written and produced by Andrea Wiley, a successful business-woman in both the corporate and entertainment industries. Her documentary centered on the trials and triumphs of single, African American women who have turned to God for happiness and purpose in their lives. *Soulmate* was engaging because of its universal message about those experiencing "prolonged singleness" to which women of all colors could in one way or another relate. The women interviewed included business-women, lawyers, authors, doctors and even an engaging evangelic

priestess with one thing in common: God was their savior and their love. All were impressive and passionate about being single and although many of the women stated they envisioned themselves getting married and having children, they realized love could not be forced. The majority of women in this film enjoyed single-life but there were those who sought for a relationship. It was astounding to listen to a forty-five year old virgin explain that she is content being single. She stated that she did not want to rush into any relationship, but rather wait until God blesses her with the right "soul mate." We had the opportunity to speak with Andrea, and she shared with us that she was beginning her next project that reflected African American men.

The Oath of Desormeau (www.theoathfilm.com) was a short film featured on the festival's last day. While speaking with the art director, it was evident the film was a labor of love. The story took place in post-Napoleonic France with two families bound by a ring and a promise. The acting was well-done and the scenery and location of the film mimicked the beauty, mystery, and elegance of a French castle.

Unexpected News (www.unexpectednews.com), a film by a nine-year-old girl, illustrated the importance of patience, courage, and prayer. The film depicts the trials of two young girls as their friendship is torn apart by a family move...but months later, an unexpected letter brings interesting news.

Music Reviews



A Collision/B Collision
David Crowder Band

David Crowder Band isn't your regular rock band. Nor are they your regular worship band. They are, in a sense, a breath of fresh air in the whole worship movement and in Christian rock altogether. They bring to the table a unique creativity that I have not seen in the industry lately.

Crowder is a master lyricist. He really has a talent with the written word and it shows through marvelously on this album. The style seems like a "stream of consciousness" in that, without music, the lyrics don't seem to fit together. But add the music, and the lyrics come alive. The music takes you on a great ride; from alternative to anthem, from 60's pop to bluegrass! It is amazing how they weave all the styles together and it blows you away.

What is even more interesting is the concept of the album, and it does resemble an early 70's concept album. Although the concept is not clear at first, it comes through after doing some research and listening to it a couple of times.

Take a listen and see not only how much you will enjoy listening to it, but how much it will speak directly to you in ways that you didn't think music could. Yes, the album is masterfully put together, but what counts is whether the artist can convey emotion through the music. David Crowder Band does it and does it well on "A Collision."

- Raul Gonzalez



Testify
P.O.D.

"If you don't stand for something, then you don't stand for nothin'."

That is exactly what P.O.D. has done since the beginning of their careers, now entering their 14th year making music. These guys from San Diego know how to rock, and ever since the addition of musician/songwriter Jason Truby, the level of their music has dramatically gone up. Arguably, this is the best album P.O.D. has ever produced with driven guitars, poignant lyrics and an awesome pounding rhythm section.

One of the highlights of the album is "Strength Of My Life" featuring the collaboration of Matisyahu. This self-proclaimed worship song is one of the best the band has written, showcasing their diverse influences. Of course, the band pounds hard on songs like "Sounds Like War," "Mistakes and Glories" and "This Time" with Truby's driving guitars and Sonny's straight-shooting lyrics. But the album as a whole is something special. It truly testifies to what P.O.D. knows to be true.

From "Roots In Stereo" to "Mark My Words," P.O.D. relentlessly do what they do best, make hard-rocking music with spiritual and touching lyrics that speak directly to the individual. It's no wonder they have such a loyal fan-base; the Warriors are what keep P.O.D. making music.

- Raul Gonzalez



Two Lights
Five for Fighting

After 2004's *The Battle for Everything*, Five for Fighting's latest release, *Two Lights*, deals with more emotional subjects and tugs at the conscience of our nation. Freedom, family and life's passions are on the mind of singer/songwriter John Ondrasik, who *is* Five for Fighting.

A native of California who has played the piano since age two, it was recommended he come up with a name that was easier to remember than Ondrasik. Being a hockey fan, he chose the stiffest penalty in the game - five minutes for fighting. Ondrasik penned the smash hit "Superman" that gained national attention after the 9/11 attacks.

The CD opens with "Freedom Never Cries" with this message: we don't pay attention to certain things until they bleed. Ondrasik writes: "I never loved the soldier until there was a war, or thought about tomorrow until my baby hit the floor."

The title track is about a conversation he had with a serviceman and his father, just before the soldier's deployment to Iraq. *Two Lights* refers to *Two Lives*, the father and the son. "That's what inspired this song, the look of pride and fear in a father's eye," Ondrasik said.

Also known to use his children's words to guide his writing in songs like "Road to Heaven" and "I Just Love You," Ondrasik has created one great album.

- Brian Busch



Photo by Brook Pifer. Courtesy of TDAA.

With their well-crafted and relatable lyrics, dynamic rhythm section, memorable guitar lines and well-placed melodies, "This Day and Age" sets themselves apart from other bands across the musical board. Originating in 2001, the Buffalo-based band gained recognition from "One Eleven Records" after nearly a year of writing and touring. Once signed, they compiled 10 songs into the album "Start Over on Monday" (released March 12, 2002) and began working on their official debut album "Always Leave the Ground." After its release, they toured for 18 months in the United States and headed overseas to Japan to promote their music.



In the summer of 2004, TDAA started writing and working on their latest album, "The Bell and the Hammer." It was released August 26, 2006 and marked the beginning of another tour for the guys. However, this tour was unfortunately much shorter.

On October 24, 2006, the lead singer/songwriter Jeff Martin announced that his passion for being in a band had faded and he would be leaving the group. The other four guys would start on a new endeavor, but not as This Day & Age. Their final show would be November 4th, in their birthplace, Buffalo, NY. The final week and a half of their touring days was packed with shows, ranging all over the north-eastern coast of the US. And, although TDAA was coming to an end, the guys did not disappoint the fans. This Day and Age's live shows have been phenomenal since they started almost 6 years ago. Couple that with a large crowd of emotional fans and you create an unforgettable experience rarely matched in the music realm.

I was able to attend one of TDAA's shows during their final week of touring. It was at the North Star Bar in Philadelphia, a classy venue that matched the style and mood of This Day & Age in every way possible. Old fashioned lamps lit the stage, which was back-dropped by a unique tan patterned hanging fabric. The room was mostly dark and the pit directly in front of the stage full of young fans. A well-placed balcony also allowed for fans to have an intimate over-head view of the performers.

Each musician in This Day and Age possesses a vast amount of talent and their performance that night certainly proved it. I was especially impressed by the drummer, Steve Padin, who hammered out beat sequences that left me breathless. They mixed a few

older songs in with the newer ones and made it a very memorable night for everyone. The entire experience was more than an hour long, but would have ended too soon even if they had played all night. Surprisingly, upon a persistent and loud request from the audience for "one more song" and after much hesitation, they played an encore number, "Slideshow," from their debut album. Joey Secchiaroli (bassist/backup vocalist) informed us they never give encores and that the song would be horrible as he was even having trouble remembering the first note. Well, if it could've been, it was even better than all the songs combined. Audience interaction was priceless as we sang all the words and reveled in the last drops of beauty and purity that is This Day & Age.



The four remaining guys are keeping fans updated on their progress concerning their new project through their MySpace page: www.myspace.com/thisdayandage. You can also visit their official webpage at <http://www.thisdayandagemusic.com>.

They said in a recent blog post, "We have had a crazy fall schedule but we are all rested and ready to get moving on the new project. As soon as we have enough material written we will record some demos and post them up here." I am one of thousands of This Day & Age fans who are excited about all things new with these guys. Check them out. You won't be disappointed.



Most musicians know first-hand just how hard it can be to find an agent and sign that first deal so they can start gaining some recognition. There are so many talented individuals out there seeking representation which really makes the competition tough, but that once exclusive door is now opening up.

The realm of music and the upswing of representation and review that is now accessible to many bands and musicians who are interested in showcasing their talents has grown by leaps and bounds in recent years via the Internet. One popular method bands and individuals have been using is to upload music over the Internet on their own personal website or via a portal which allows the artists to tell the world a bit about themselves. Music Freedom (www.musicfreedom.com) is one such site that gives artists a platform over which they can market themselves.

I had the wonderful privilege of sitting with one of Music Freedom's founders, Mr. Alex Greggs, for a rare interview. He has worked with talent like *NSYNC, JC Chasez, Shakira, Pink, Ricky Martin, Paris Hilton, and Britney Spears.

True to his nature of writing, producing, mixing and creating music, Mr. Greggs, along with his partners, created Music Freedom as a means for musicians to showcase their music online. It is my pleasure to introduce the creative genius Mr. Alex Greggs.

Andrew: Thank you Mr. Greggs for joining me today. We appreciate you taking the time to visit with us. Tell me who is behind Music Freedom?

Alex: I work as the Chief Creative Office and one of the founders. We also have Mike Tucker who is our CEO and a founder as well. Mike handles the business side to Music Freedom. In addition, we also have Jason Mannard our CTO, Chief Technical Officer. We are the three founders of Music Freedom.

On our board, we have Eamonn Maguire who is a manager in the entertainment industry.

Right now it is the four of us.

Q: How did the four of you come together?

A: The concept for Music Freedom came around in 2002 when me and Mike Tucker were producing the *NSYNC record. After one of the sessions we were playing some songs and talked how we wished the album could have included more of them or a way people could hear it. That conversation continued over to a website where people could upload and trade music. A few months later we started to build a company that was similar to ITUNES and independent artists; however, we were each busy with our own projects and the idea just sat there.

We researched how ITUNES worked with independent artists and considered "Music Freedom" idea again. It was around this time as well that myspace.com and social

networking was becoming popular.

In its early conception, Music Freedom was a fan site for JC Chasez, a member of NSYNC, and we were going to launch with JC, and slowly introduce the music freedom side. Later in 2004, JC's record came out and we went our separate ways.

We are feverishly working on the third version of the site, which will be more intuitive. It's also going to be a means where musicians can hook-up with producers.

Q: What is your interest with music?

A: My passion has always been music. I have been making a living with writing and producing music since I was 13. I have sold over 50 million records and worked with some of the biggest names in the business. I would love Music Freedom to make a profit, but my main interest in making an avenue for artists.

Q: How many registered bands are there on the site?

A: I think we're around 2,500 bands.

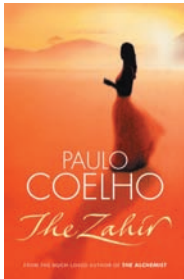
Q: Does Music Freedom have any social events?

A: We have done a showcase, and took the top acts and placed them in front of producers. We've done one on the East and West coast.

If you're a musician or band who is looking for an avenue to tell the world about your talent, or if you want to locate and research new artists to listen to yourself or review, please visit their website at www.musicfreedom.com. You can also listen to a variety of Music Freedom radio stations via their website.



Book Reviews



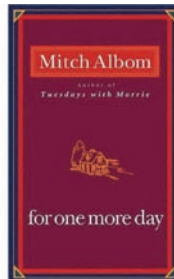
***The Zahir: A Novel of Love, Longing and Obsession*
By Paulo Coelho**

From the author of the critically acclaimed *The Alchemist*, Paulo Coelho's *The Zahir* is a captivating tale about the nature of life and love.

The novel follows the spiritual quest of a famous, yet anonymous, author whose wife suddenly abandons him after ten years of marriage. Despite his fame and fortune and his efforts to move on, the image of his wife colours every aspect of his life and he enlists the help of Mikhail, an enigmatic stranger who may have been his wife's secret lover and who holds the key to finding her. The unnamed author travels the world in search of self-understanding, discovery and the woman whose memory plagues his dreams and thoughts.

Like Coelho's other works, *The Zahir* combines elements of storytelling and philosophy in a way that resembles popular self-improvement and inspirational literature. The story seems almost autobiographical at times and one can only wonder if Paulo Coelho was chasing his own 'zahir' - that is, the one thing that we would not be complete without - when he wrote this novel. While the characters themselves are somewhat uninspiring, Coelho's words of wisdom have the power to make readers re-examine their own lives and question their own understanding of 'love.'

- Kelly McGuire



***For One More Day*
By Mitch Albom**

The latest release from the writer of *Tuesdays with Morrie*, *For One More Day* is a compelling story combining fiction, mystery and intrigue. Rich in its dialogue and detail, the reader might need a reminder that this is not Mitch Albom's autobiography.

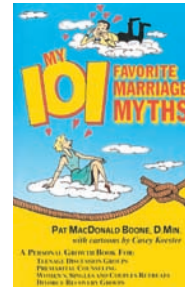
The book asks the question: What if you lost someone you love, and had a chance to be with them again? Albom meets and queries Chick Benetto, a man who gets the chance to go back home and spend one more day with his mother, giving him powerful insights into her life and his own.

Benetto made bad choices in life: drinking too much, leaving his family, losing his savings. Perhaps the mistake he paid the highest price for was rejecting the notion of being "mommy's boy," in favor of "daddy's boy."

Through this encounter with his mother, he learns what love truly means. He learns that you have to give your love to the right people. He learns that it is OK to be mommy's boy. Albom takes the reader from flashback to present day, and back again, to emphasize the importance of making every day and moment count.

A great book that is hard to put down, it is most powerful after the death of a loved one, or Christmas, or Easter, or anytime the spirit moves you. After all, every family is a ghost story.

- Brian Busch



***My 101 Favorite Marriage Myths*
By Pat MacDonald Boone**

Recent divorce rates in the United States paint a grim picture: nearly 1 in 2 marriages end in divorce. While a variety of generally accepted factors may help explain what is behind the skyrocketing divorce rate, Dr. Pat Boone believes a big part of the problem is the abundance of confusing and contradictory misinformation available when it comes to marriage.

My 101 Favorite Marriage Myths was written to be easy-to-read and humorous, because Dr. Boone felt the subject demanded a perspective that was neither judgmental nor boring. The book is written as a workbook to allow space for notes so discussions can be held between couples, groups or with counselors.

My 101 Favorite Marriage Myths address issues such as planning the wedding, managing finances, parenting, the "honeymoon" period, disagreements, and a host of other qualms, questions and quandaries. While I think this book may be much more valuable for those couples who are just getting started and have yet to get married, there are sure to be topics that some married couples have never gotten around to addressing or perhaps never even considered before. Peppared with amusing illustrations, this book provides a humorous, yet telling, look at how two people can really make a marriage work.

- Tiffany Simpson



Promoting Advocacy

Why Joanie Laurer Continues to Serve As A Role Model Interview by Andrew Moreno

I recently had the opportunity to sit down and talk with one of the most influential women in our time, Joanie Laurer. Joanie has accomplished so much in her career that her resume and list of accomplishments seem endless. We admire this woman for her passion, her strength, her ability to encourage others, and her enthusiasm for life. Among her accomplishments include two top-selling magazines, a book featured on the *New York Times* best-selling list, numerous championship belts, international fame, product endorsements, and movie roles. In this interview, Joanie Laurer opened up about her perceptions on life, relationships and her battles with domestic violence.

Andrew: Joanie, thank you again for joining me today. The last time we saw you was at *Vh1's Surreal Life* reunion show. At this time, you made positive changes in your life, can you comment on those changes?

Joanie: I think that the positive changes were my separation from several things that were destructive in my life. And since then, I have become an advocate for individuals in violent relationships, even more so because I went through one. Being a public figure there was a lot of things I did wrong, dealing with fame and trying to have a private life, because I didn't know how to deal with them. Most of the time I didn't know how to deal with them [violent relationship], so I kept many things hidden. Instead of trying to deal with my problems, I thought they would naturally go away. But in retrospect, I have learned that those things [domestic violence] don't go away. And so the lesson that I learned was to take the risk and do what you have to do to separate yourself from that situation by asking for help. In addition, many women do not know

how to handle such a situation. It's really hard to fight alone and so I had people support me, who encouraged me to walk away from a relationship that was doing more harm than good.

A: When you began to gain support, was it then that you decided to make positive changes in your life?

J: No, I had already made that decision before but I was not ready to make those final changes. Nor did I have the support to make that change, because many people don't like hearing about things or being around negativity. Plus, they have their own lives to worry about, and I don't blame them for not wanting to be around that. Even more so, I don't think a lot of people know what to do in that situation. I wasn't aware of any programs set up to help women in situations like this. Most women don't do anything because of fear, but they're already experiencing the fear and the worst part of it. The answer to the question is yes, I knew I wanted to change but it became a process for me. Since ending my abusive relationship, I am in a happier place.

A: What are the happiest moments in your life?

J: I would say that there are two happy moments in my life, which top the chart. The first was when I had the opportunity to fight in Japan. For that fight I was invited to wrestle by the New Japan Wrestling Corporation where I trained over a year with different fighters. When I went to fight it was with the mentality that it was with a positive message for women, but looking back I wouldn't do it again. I was very appreciative of the invitation and it was very humbling. My experience in Japan taught me how to defend myself, and I consider that a gift. The second happiest moment in my life is right now, and I'm in a place where I'm looking forward to more. I'm

in a place where I am enjoying just being at peace. I feel better than ever, I feel I look my best and I'm starting my acting career by going to several auditions. But there is still more growing to do, and in the future I know I will appreciate where I am right now. I feel that I have survived, and I wake up happy. Like everyone else, I'm basically living my life and I'm enjoying it very much.

A: We've spoken about your positive changes, and how your life has changed. Can you comment on your beliefs on spirituality and your motivation?

J: I do consider myself a very spiritual person. All the choices I have made were to better myself. They may not have been the best choices, but they never came from the wrong place. All my choices came from a good place inside. Not being spiritual is almost being greedy or it's something negative. Being spiritual is trying to constantly do well and make a positive impact. I never expected my life to turn out this way, and I feel blessed to experience the things I have experienced.

In terms of motivation, I have to talk about my career. I never intended to be a wrestler but things turned out that way, and I ended up being the greatest female professional wrestler. I never wanted to come across in a way that was sexual, but I wanted to feel beautiful and I wanted to show people that women come in all shapes and sizes. I wanted to write a book about my life but didn't expect it to be a best selling book. So, what motivates me are people, my surroundings and music. How I view how others view me helps me appreciate what I have done. Ten years ago people would see me on the street and throw things and call me names, but now people approach me with loving arms and many thanks.

(continued page 20)

Once Again, Andrew Keegan Interview by Andrew Moreno

Perhaps the most inspiring thing about Andrew Keegan, besides his long list of acting and producing roles, is Andrew's demeanor and humble attitude. I had the privilege of meeting Mr. Keegan during the 2005 Sundance Film Festival at a VIP party.

I approached Mr. Keegan and introduced myself, expecting Andrew to give me a simple smile and that would be it. But to my surprise, he looked me right in the eye, shook my hand and asked me how I was doing. We chatted for several minutes about his past work and Andrew was kind enough to let us take some photos.

I met up with Andrew almost a year later, right before he was about to take a plane to New York for a film in production.

A. Moreno: Thank you for joining me again Mr. Keegan. Let's jump right into it - what have you been up to?

A. Keegan: There is a project underway in New York. It's a story about three brothers who own a bakery. We will be shooting that project for the next three weeks.

The other project I am working on is called "InterLove." There are three guy friends who are each in different phases in their relationships. I play a character that is in a 7-year relationship, and I find my girlfriend in a compromising position.

And there are some other projects that are in the works right now as well.

Q: Not only do you act, but you also produce. Which one do you find more challenging?

A: It is certainly more challenging to be in the producer's role. It's a balance for me. There are times to be creative and other times to act. I have dabbled in acting and producing and I enjoy both

but a big part of me loves to act. I love to really get into a character's role.

A: How have you grown as an actor in the past 13 years when you had your first role?

Q: A lot of acting is opportunity-based. Many people say it, but I wonder if they truly know what that means. It's important to me to find roles that mean something and say something. I like to play roles that make people think and roles where I can be challenged.

A: What have been some of your favorite experiences?

A: I enjoyed "O," the Othello adaptation. I was [also] able to work with so many peers that are now doing wonderful things. For example, working with Heath [Ledger (They worked together in *10 Things I Hate About You* (1999))] who was nominated for an Oscar for *Brokeback [Mountain]* was amazing. It is amazing to work with so many people in different ways. Every time you work on a set you meet many people, and learn something new. That's the nature of the business, live and learn.

Q: What's your motivation?

A: I think it's accomplishment and the feeling you get when you're in the "zone." There is a feeling of creating and progression.

Q: What are you current goals?

A: Careers go up and down. I have had a lot of experiences both on screen and off. The last couple of years I have begun to settle down and refocus my goals and get some work done. I am lining up things for the rest of summer and working with being open to new ideas. I really want to work with great directors and co-stars. We're all looking for that one role that is just "great."

Q: Have you always wanted to be an actor?

A: I started acting relatively young. It was in my early teens when I began to understand the theory behind acting and one thing lead to another. It's so important for an actor to be versatile. Once I learned the craft, I really began to love acting. It's been up and down, and overall I feel so blessed to make a living with something I just adore.

Q: Any advice for actors?

A: I don't know if I have all the answers, logistically. It's difficult to say what goals people have. It begins with desire and the execution. We all need opportunity and everything just falls into place. It all goes down during the casting, when all actors have to prove what they say they can do. Though you begin to network and meet people starting anywhere.

Q: What's your goal outside of acting?

A: Life is all about experiences. I have goals of being happy, successful, and I feel like I have a wonderful life. I also want to do things that raise the conciseness of others while seeing other people happy. Obviously, I have been thinking about sharing my life with children. I'm not there yet, but you think about it now and again.

A. Moreno: Thank you Mr. Keegan.



Setting Boundaries in Relationships

Set resolutions this year with which you can live

by Amber Newsome

With 2007 fast approaching, now is the perfect time to start making your resolutions for the next 365 days. Instead of pledging to never eat another piece of chocolate, why not do something different, like promise yourself that you're not going to allow someone to break your heart again.

Yes, you read that correctly - broken hearts are an unavoidable part of life. But the control lies with you. By realizing that you have control over who has access to your emotions, you wield the power to control how much or how little you hurt when a relationship crashes and burns!

When you set up boundaries, you tell others what you will allow them to do. Boundaries allow you to look after your feelings, attitudes, behaviours, limits, thoughts & desires.

Watch over your heart with all diligence, for from it flow the springs of life.
- Proverbs 4:23

How far is too far?

This is the question that seems to be asked most often by Christians who are in dating relationships. In the book *Technical Virgin: A Sexy Girl's Book*, Hayley Dimarco restates something she and fellow author Justin Lookadoo said in their book *Dateable: Are You? Are They?*

"Pretend there is a cameraman with you, shooting all your moves. Then at the end of the night, your entire family is getting together to look at your slide show. 'Here I am unbuttoning my top. Here we are rubbing on each other. Here we are swapping saliva.' All while Granny and your mom look on in surprise. What would you be comfortable showing the entire fam? If you aren't comfortable doing show-and-tell later that night, then you

probably shouldn't be doing it."

Recently while reading *Dateable: Are You? Are They?*, I realized that my actions in my romantic relationships certainly weren't appropriate for a popcorn and slide show night with the family. I also concluded that if you don't feel comfortable with your family knowing or seeing what you've been doing when they're not around, you really shouldn't be doing it. Let's face it, if you're still in high school right now, chances are slim that you'll still be together with Mr. Hot Stuff later on down the road. "51% of teen marriages end in divorce before the age of 24," Hayley quotes in *Technical Virgin: A Sexy Girl's Book*.

As I was writing this article, my male friend Taylor gave me some of his own personal insight into how guys think. He said to me, "Every guy thinks of a girl naked. No matter what guy says he doesn't, he does." He went on to say that if a guy likes a girl, he'll take things slow. But if he isn't that into a girl, the guy will try for sex and if he goes home empty-handed, no biggie - he'll just keep trying. Guys want sex. End of story.

How do you define flirting?

Massages, tickle fights and naps are just a few things that many girls classify as "flirting." In reality, "what may seem like just a sweet little encounter could actually be giving the guy a mixed message," says Hayley in *Technical Virgin*. I'll touch briefly on each of these right now, but in future issues, I'll discuss them more in depth.

Massages

After a long day, it's nice for the guy you're with to give you a good rub down without expecting anything in return isn't it? But is it merely a kind

gesture from him or something more? When two people who are dating touch each other, either to hold hands or for Mr. Hot Stuff to slip his arm around you, it is an intimate gesture and it is sexual - implicitly or explicitly.

The truth of the matter is this: What guy is going to say no when his girlfriend asks him to touch her? That's what a massage is isn't it? He gets to sensually work his hands over your skin. He gets to feel you, your curves, the knots in your shoulders from tense muscles and if his hands travel a little too low, what does it matter because it feels good and is so relaxing, right? Hayley gets points when she says that if a guy denies that he's thinking of anything sexual when he's giving you a good rub down, go ahead and "ask him how many massages he gives to his 83-year old grandmother and see if that doesn't gross him out."

Tickle fights that lead to more

How do you spell trouble with a capital T? Tickle fights.

Typically they go something like this. You say something cheeky, he pokes your shoulder or your stomach and because you're the most ticklish person on the planet, you giggle. This time he picks you up and you start laughing and squirming. You finally wriggle free and run from him. He chases and catches you, holds you tight and tickles you more. As you breathlessly try to get free from him yet again, you both fall with him on top of you and time freezes. Suddenly, you're out of breath for a different reason and have no time to think as his lips crush yours in a passionate kiss. After a hot makeout session, the pair of you falls asleep cuddled up. I wonder what your parents would think if they walked in on that...

(continued on page 20)



New Year's Resolutions It's time for a change in perspectives by Andrew Moreno

While our attention turns towards the New Year, we must reflect on the past. This past year was a time of joy and sadness. Our country saw the continuation of war, the passing of world leaders, change in our democracy, and the continuation to always strive for compassion and love. It was also during this past year that I had the great fortune of meeting many influential people during my travels/interviews with Lifted Magazine. The most inspiring people were those I met at Paramount's Gay Day and Katherine Connella. They stood out amongst the others primarily because of their compassion, testimony and journey.

It's no surprise that many of our most interesting people are those who have endured abuse and hate, and now live life to the fullest. Ironic that I mention living life to the fullest, perhaps it's just my observation, but many Christians believe that life is about suffering and pain. Shouldn't we enjoy God's gift of life and appreciate all that inhabit it?

It's not enough to extend a helping hand to those with which you are familiar. We must go beyond our comfort zone and assist others who need to be heard and loved. Simply put, if we won't love them, no one else will. Unfortunately, we live in a society that still uses sexual orientation as a pedestal for judgment, including some of our religious leaders. Sexual orientation is a lifestyle one does not ask for; it is given. It becomes hard when members of your faith outwardly criticize you, when all one wants is to be heard and understood. Who would choose to be segregated, abused, and belittled? My guess: no one. I thought it would be fitting this holiday season to extend our homes and hearts to those, who for so long have suffered, many times at the expense of their family and friends.

The continual determination

of homosexuals in U.S. history is conducive to the idea that humans are deterministic in nature. That determinism embodies a refusal to quit and submit in the face of opposition. These genetic traits are intrinsic in all humans, gay and straight. With this in mind, one cannot deny a growing presence and force that homosexuals have garnered within society. Politics, education, entertainment, all mediums of communication and government institutes learn to embrace homosexuals as equals. If not, those institutions suffer by objectively committing discrimination.

It is no surprise that many of our most interesting people are those who have endured abuse and hate, and now live life to the fullest.

An individual's sexual preference is not a pedestal for judgment—sexuality does not determine the integrity of a person. A communal society must embrace life with a subjective outlook and forgo indifferent perspectives on alternative lifestyles. The omnipresent discussion of homosexual determination is rife with conflict and disagreements. Whether biological or choice, homosexuals are entitled to the same rights and respect as everyone else.

The word "homosexual" is a derivative from the word "gay." "Gay" is its ancestral meaning, was understood as a state of happiness. In early civilizations, homosexuality was a common practice among Greek civilians. The homosexual movement, within the U.S., became a topic of discussion preceding World War II. After the war, lesbians and gays, both U.S. and European citizens, migrated to New York and its surrounding area—mostly Manhattan. In fact, veterans helped organize The Veterans Benevolent Association, one

of the first homosexual groups in U.S. history. The homosexual movement has been cyclical in nature; early generations, typically European, were open to homosexuals. It was not until the late forties and fifties that the U.S. deemed homosexuality as a mental disease. Since the rise for equality and tolerance, homosexuals have been at the forefront in the equality battle.

Current scientific studies have determined that during the transition of growth, inside the mother, something internal happens with the amount of hormones an individual receives. It is fact that homosexuals will continue to demand equality, while internally suffering. Imagine a life where you are condemned at birth and you are represented by foolish stereotypical characters.

My prayer for this next year is that our religious leaders start to see things through the eyes of others, and are less quick to jump to conclusions. What they fail to understand is that every time they publicly criticize homosexuals, they are losing and missing the love of Christ. Instead of creating a welcome that leads people to be accepted, talk about their issues, and explore their sexuality, they are quickly turned away and never given a second chance. Why have we come to accept this behavior? Why would we condemn someone for something they cannot control? Wouldn't it be better if we created communication surrounded with love and positive feelings? For the best of me I cannot understand this axiom.

I challenge you this next year to open your hearts and understand another perception. We each have our own past, our own hurt, and our own needs. Why not bring joy into someone's life?

The Lifted Magazine Gift Giving Guide

by Tiffany Simpson & Lifted Magazine Staff

It's that time of year again when everyone is bustling around buying gifts for loved ones, colleagues and sometimes even themselves. But that process of selecting just the right gift for everyone you know is not always an easy process. So we've assembled a few items that we think are quite grand and would make great gifts for others (or yourself). Some are traditional gifts like clothing and games...but others encourage you to reach out to others by volunteering your time, donating your money or donating other items. We hope that you will find just what you've been looking for right here.

Under \$20



Newf Brand Body Spray & Lip Balm

Some of us in this world are practically addicted to lip balms, body lotions and body sprays. But have you ever looked on the label to see what's actually in those tubes? Chemicals galore. But Newf Brand is different. They focus on keeping the products natural without losing any quality. They're just starting out and don't even have their website live yet but since I know the creators and have tested the products, I know you're going to love them.

Price: Lip Balm \$3.95, 8 oz. Body Spray \$12.95

Website: www.newfbrand.com

From \$20 - \$50



Settlers of Canaan

You might have heard of the Settlers of Catan, a wildly fun strategy game that is actually one of my personal favorites. But what about the Settlers of Canaan? This version of the game takes place in the territory of Canaan off the coast of The Great Sea. Each player represents a tribe of Israel as they seek to settle the land of Canaan and also to help build Jerusalem.

If strategy games aren't for you, why not check out their Christian versions of Outburst, Scategories, Apples to Apples or Guesstures.

Price: \$29.99

Website: www.cactusgamedesign.com

"The Missing Peace"™ Pendant

Something about these pieces really makes me think. Unfortunately we were not able to obtain a picture of this product but imagine a puzzle piece with a small cross etched in it and the words "the Missing Peace." It was designed to remind those who wear it and see it that in this hectic and crazy world, faith is often that little bit of peace missing in our lives. Available in sterling silver and 14K gold, this style is available as a keychain, pedant, lapel pin or pocket piece.

Price: Sterling silver products start at \$15. Gold at \$185.

Website: www.two-blonds.com

Over \$100

Outfits from C28



So you want to give someone a few nice new threads but you aren't a fashion addict? C28 is making your shopping process a

whole lot easier this year. They offer entire outfits to help your selection process and you don't even have to worry if you happen to be color blind. Available for Guys & Juniors sections.

Price: 3-Piece Palace Outfit for Juniors: \$170

Website: www.c28.com

Gifts That Keep On Giving

Adopt Your Local Animal Shelter or Rescue Organization

You're probably thinking there is something missing here when I say "adopt your shelter," but that is actually exactly what I mean. Local SPCA chapters and Humane Societies are overrun with animals at all times of the year. If you don't have the time or space to give one of these critters a new home, don't feel that all hope is lost. You can start with something as simple as a donation of a few cans of food or a bag of kitty litter. Or if you have time to donate, help clean out cages, take dogs for walks or give baths. There are many ways you can help so contact your local shelter to ask what you can do to make a change.

You could also contact a local "rescue" organization for your favorite breed of animal and see what sort of help they are needing. Rescue organizations do not get national funding and therefore depend on the generosity of people even more. Items such as transportation crates, food, toys and even phone cards are helpful. You can also volunteer your time to wash a few dogs or walk them so the rescue worker usually responsible for the pets has a break for themselves or can take care of other important tasks. Rescue organizations also often need help transporting pets to and from new and old owners so you may be able to help in that respect as well.

SPCA Website: www.sPCA.com
Humane Society: www.hsus.org

Adopt a Chimp



Before you start thinking about how much fun it would be to have a monkey running around your house, no, you won't be able to bring one of these little guys home. But if you happen to live in Fort Pierce, FL, or Alamogordo, NM, you could volunteer your time to help out around the facilities. You still won't be able to work one-on-one with the little guys but you will be doing a great service to those who do care for them directly.

Adopting a Chimp will cost you \$120 a year and there are 10 chimps to choose from. You can also find a Wish List online of items the two sites need and send a package to them with goodies such as animal crackers, blankets, dried fruit and stuffed animals.

Website: www.savethechimps.org
Price: One year adoption fee is \$120 but there are many other ways to contribute for less.

For Those in Europe

Stylish Aprons from Cool Cooking



These stylish aprons make a great gift for anyone who loves to cook and dress up. If you're holding a dinner party and don't want to be caught dead in a frumpy apron, then this is the perfect way to keep stains off your party clothes and look stylish at the same time. Aprons are available in a variety of styles and colours.

Website (Dutch only): coolcooking.nl

Price: Not known

Shops: Branches be found in the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, Spain and Italy.

Gifts for Your Pet



Gingerbread House Dog Puzzle Toy

I had trouble picking out just one toy from this website because there are so many great ones but this is a fun holiday toy. The gingerbread house comes with a little gingerbread person, a plush present and a plush bone. You stuff all the pieces into the house and your dog uses his skills to pull everything out again. Sounds like it should keep most dogs amused for a while although you might want to toss a few treats in there somewhere too.

Or how about making your dog's year and joining the Toy of the Month club. For only \$12.95 a month, both you and your dog will soon be looking forward to every new package. Toys are catered toward your dog's interests,

size and living environment.

Price: \$18.95

Website: www.funstufffordogs.com

Cat Cottage



Don't worry, it looks more expensive than it is. If you want to give your cat(s) hours of enjoyment, give them this four-story cottage constructed

of heavy-duty cardboard to romp around in. I'm thinking my cats would eventually start eating it since they love cardboard but the price is low enough that I guess I could get them a new one once a year...until I learn how to build my own.

In addition to all the fun toys and games they have for your pets of all shapes and sizes, this website also has many nutritional supplements, over-the-counter medications and much more.

Price: \$34.99

Website: www.drsfostersmith.com

For Those on a Budget

Yes, all these gifts are grand - but what if you don't have a fortune to spend? Why not bake a batch of cookies or a special bread as a gift? Or perhaps you'd rather do something more creative? Or less? The Internet is full of great ideas. You can try these websites for starters:

All Free Crafts - With over 500 free and inexpensive craft ideas, this site should keep you busy. You can even learn how to make your own snowglobes.

www.allfreecrafts.com

Ruby Glen - This website is full of all sorts of ideas for Christmas, birthdays, weddings and much more.

www.rubyglen.com

The Shepherd Girl

by Tammy Lewelling

'Twas the night before Christmas, and in our little house, true love did abound. Tired eyes closed in wonder of special things to come. The lights were twinkling, the tinsel was hung and the angels were all standing guard. They watched over my tender one as she dreamt of that one special night 2000 years ago when a lowly manger played host to our new baby King. Perhaps she entered in shepherd's costume as she imagined herself a bystander to this greatest of all miracles....

The stench of the cattle was so strong it took her by surprise. The scene was a busy one, travelers tousing about looking for lodging, frustrated with a government that would impose yet another tax on their already heavily burdened shoulders. Little did any of them know the miracle that was taking place in their very midst.

Of course she knew, for she had heard the story since she herself was a babe. But even for her, the hustle and bustle of Bethlehem almost overwhelmed her. The sights and sounds, the smells of the animals, the angry voices of travelers being turned away as the innkeepers all cried, "No more room!"

She was beginning to wonder if perhaps she herself should try to find shelter when her eyes rose to meet a young woman, only a few years older than she. She was coming into town on a donkey being pulled by a very tired-looking man. He had a gentle manner as he began to inquire at every inn about lodging for his wife who was very close to giving birth to their first child. My little shepherd girl watched with compassion as the couple was repeatedly told, "The inn is full, can't you hear? Go away!"

The young woman began to look

fearful and greatly pained. The man's tone changed to a decidedly more fervent pitch. "Please, sir, my wife... she's about to give birth! Please, sir, anywhere will do. I simply have to find lodging for her soon!"

Another door slammed shut.

Suddenly my shepherd girl (remembering the stable in the Bible) stammered out to the young woman, "There's a stable around the back. It belongs to my family. I know it's not much but you will be out of the weather."

The young woman on the donkey looked over at her husband and at her. The worry on their faces melted into smiles of gratitude.

"My name is Mary and this is Joseph. Thank you...it has been a long journey."

The little shepherd girl, enthralled at the sight of Mary and Joseph, hoped she could stay asleep until she could actually see Jesus. For, although it had seemed very real, she knew it was only a dream.

In an instant, she found herself standing on a chilly hillside, with other shepherds and dozens of sheep.

"Where I am?" she wondered. "Where is the manger and Mary? The baby is coming soon; why am I here?"

And then she heard them. She had never heard anything so beautiful in her life. The music that could almost be seen, as though the sense of hearing was not enough. And then the light came. Thousands of rays of light, in a rainbow of colors that eyes had never seen, streaming from heavenly beings. It was almost too wonderful to behold.

She felt warm and loved. She heard them tell of the Savior's birth with great reverence. They sent peace to all men (and shepherd girls) on Earth. They instructed the shepherds to follow the

star, so that they may worship the new king.

All at once, she found herself in a great crowd, standing around Mary and Baby Jesus. The crowd members fell on the ground in worship to the King of the Universe. The shepherd girl timidly approached the child king.

"Welcome Lord Jesus. Thank you for coming and giving your life for us."

The shepherds standing around the shepherd girl looked at each other in puzzlement looks. "What is she talking about? Is she crazy?" asked one of them.

Things began to fade, as though she were in the clouds....and slowly she began to awaken.

"Sweetheart, wake up. It's Christmas," I called. "Melissa... Melissa....wake up sweetie. ..presents!"

"Good morning, Mommy. Merry Christmas!" she said in her sleepy "good morning" whisper.

I reached down to give her a hug and said, "I think Santa's been here!" with a sly grin on my face.

Then she tilted her head and looked at me with all the seriousness an 8-year-old can muster and said, "No, Mommy. It's Jesus that's been here."

Blessings in Disguise

Just because you don't always get what you ask for, doesn't mean God isn't working in your life
by Kaci Lane

The Holidays are just around the corner. Everyone devotes a little more time to shopping, planning and thanking. Something about this time of year causes many of us to acknowledge the blessings in our life that we usually take for granted.

This year, in addition to thanking God for all the things He has done for me in my life, I decided to also thank Him for all the things He didn't do in my life. This may sound bizarre, but from a positive perspective, many setbacks in life are really just "blessings in disguise."

When I think back on some of the milestones in my life that have occurred this year, I realize how God protected me from so much more hurt and pain simply by not answering all of my prayers. Well, at least not answering them the way I wanted Him to. I am reminded of God's words to us in Isaiah 56:8, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways."

This past June, I married my boyfriend of over four years. We get along great, and he is a wonderful Christian person. While we share many common interests and hobbies, he also has a lot of strengths that I lack. I used to think I wanted to find someone exactly like myself. But now I see how God uses the strengths of each person in a relationship to complement the weaknesses of the other.

Exactly two months before our wedding day, we buried my grandfather. Papa was like a father to me. I always said that my biggest fear was that I would one day have to experience his death. I honestly did not think I would be capable of living out my everyday life without him. The older he got, the more I prayed for him to live. Our family prayed for God to completely heal him of cancer. And God did. Just not the way we wanted Him to. Papa had worked since he was nine years old, and at the age of almost 80, he

was ready to go to heaven and reap his rewards.

For a long time I felt pain, bitterness, and even resentment toward God for letting this happen. But I learned many lessons from this disguised blessing:

- 1) It was selfish of me to want to keep a saint of God here on the earth when his work was done
- 2) I had trusted too much in my Papa, a human being, for things I should have relied on more from God
- 3) We can all overcome facing even our greatest fears with help and comfort from the Holy Spirit dwelling within us.

A few months after Papa's death, God started dealing with me to go see my biological father. We had not spoken to each other in over a year. I had a lot of animosity toward him for some things that happened in my childhood. Even though I had found peace with Papa going to heaven, I still felt heaviness inside of me. The Holy Spirit revealed that this was what unforgiveness feels like.

I prayed and asked God to give me the opportunity to speak with him. That very weekend I saw him at a hometown football game and prayed for the courage to speak with him. I told him I loved him and that we needed to try and be friends. We talk some now and everything is still not perfect between us but I can live in peace knowing that I did my part. God used my fear and hurt to prompt me into resolving years of conflict. Any time we choose to walk in love and swallow our pride, God will bless us.

During all of these changes, I also had an ongoing trial in my life. After graduating from college, with an extensive resume of experience from both a major magazine and newspaper in Alabama and an almost perfect GPA, I found myself unemployed. I could not find a job in my field anywhere in Alabama. Even the companies that I had previously worked for, who wanted to hire me, had job freezes.

I finally turned to God, like I should have to begin with, and then the situation brightened. I took several odds and ends jobs to get by. God miraculously worked many small miracles in my life, reaffirming His promise to never leave us or forsake us (Heb. 13:5). I even received a refund from the power company for a substantial amount of money! I ended up finding discounts every time I went Christmas shopping during the season. It seemed like every time I had to spend money, people gave me favor; not because I acted poor but because I acted thankful.

As it turns out, I landed a copy editing position with a Christian publishing company in Birmingham. The job provides great pay and benefits, and I basically get paid to read God's Word all day! I also have every other Friday off. Even better, I started right after my honeymoon, which meant that I still had all my vacation days to use later. I had plenty of time to spend with Papa during his last days on earth, and plenty of time to plan and organize my wedding. Isn't God great! I would have not even known about Clarity Publishers, where I now enjoy working, if God had answered my prayers for a job with one of my previous companies.

This season, don't just think about the blessings before you, but also look deeper for blessings in disguise. Satan likes to throw many obstacles in our way. But God has plans to give us hope and a good future (Jer. 29:11). If we keep our eyes on Jesus, think positive, and listen to the Holy Spirit, we can live with peace and assurance that everything will turn out right for us just as God intended.

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him who have been called according to his purpose. Romans 8:28



Devotions

Blessed... Even when no one is looking by Kamenka Belton

Rejection. It is something all of us know; some too well. No matter how many times we experience it, the unexpected sting of it always leaves us questioning our worth. No one knows this better than Leah. She's the unattractive maiden in Genesis 29 that is hoodwinked into marrying Jacob. Much to her surprise and dismay, Jacob not only scornfully rejects his new bride but agrees to work an additional seven years to marry her beautiful sister Rachel.

If you've experienced rejection, you know the whirlwind of emotions Leah must have felt when she realized she had not only married someone who despised her, but also wanted to marry her sister instead. We've all been in that place where we are so consumed by the desire for acceptance that we will go to every extreme to achieve it. Leah was no different. She eventually gave birth to three sons in an attempt to win the affection and attention of Jacob. It wasn't until Leah birthed her fourth son, Judah, that she decided to praise and acknowledge God for her blessings with or without Jacob in her life. When reading the last verse of chapter 29, I like to think that Leah came to realize that she did not need Jacob's love as long as she had God's favor.

This is the attitude we should strive to have whenever we find ourselves experiencing rejection. Like many of us, Leah struggled to understand why God allowed that kind of pain into her life. It later became clear that she was being blessed with gifts that no one, not even her sister, would possess.

Isaiah 26:3 teaches us that God will keep us in a state of perfected peace when we keep our thoughts and actions centered on Him. Even during the times when you feel the highest sense of rejection, God is blessing you with gifts and fruits of the spirit that are uniquely yours.

Despite how the world makes you feel, know that these gifts are His personal tokens of affection to let you know that you are still special, desirable and loved.

Enter The No Fear Zone by Niambi Jarvis, CEO/Founder Hiyaah Power.com

A few months ago I delivered a speech entitled *Just Do It* in honor of a women's day service. I took the time to share with the congregation one of my testimonies and how God has blessed me with a "Just Do It" spirit. Sitting back several months later and having spoken to many of my friends and even contemplating on earlier times in my life, I now realize that before you can Just Do It you must enter the No Fear Zone.

I recognize that both concepts create visions of the fearless conquest of one's dreams. That, in and of itself, stops women dead in their tracks. I have been walking in the No Fear Zone for a few years now. I wasn't aware of when I entered it initially. But as I began to share stories with friends and colleagues, they had a hard time believing that I suffered from fear. Actually, I not only battled with fear, but I also suffered with anxiety... fear's ugly little cousin.

We all know the old saying, "There's nothing to fear, but fear itself." Well, I don't know of a more true statement. Fear is not real...it is an illusion that wraps itself around us and our dreams. Fear sounds like a roaring lion, when in reality it's just a little kitten. Fear smells like a 3-alarm fire, when in reality it's just a little smoke. Fear looks like a mountain of obstacles—when in reality it's just a few hills of doubt. Fear tastes like poison—when in reality it's just a bitter taste on your tongue. Christ asks the poignant question in Matthew 8:26, "You of little faith, why are you so afraid?"

Once we learn how to put our fears in perspective, we are free to move into our ordained purposes here on Earth. Did you know that the primary goal of fear is to keep you from realizing who you truly are and to stop you from moving one step closer to your destiny? "I sought the LORD, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears." (Psalm 34:4)

"What do I do then?", you may ask. Breathe a little, read an uplifting scripture or piece of motivational literature, pray,

meditate or simply ask God..."What do you want me to do?" When you hear that still small voice telling you to go for it, push past the fear and do what it is your heart is telling you. You may be shaking and trembling while you do it...you may be sweating bullets and your palms may be damp. But guess what? Once you enter the No Fear Zone, each subsequent battle becomes easier.

The following verses can be used as your tools of empowerment as you move past your fears..

- Psalm 27:1
- Luke 12:32
- Psalm 56:3
- Psalm 145:20
- 1 John 4:18
- Matthew 8:26
- Mark 5:36
- Proverbs 29:25
- Luke 12:4-5
- Proverbs 1:7
- Matthew 10:28
- Isaiah 35:3-4
- Psalm 46:2-3
- Isaiah 12:2

Some women used to ask me how I managed to feel comfortable in an executive environment in a board room full of men. I shared my creative visualization techniques and how I saw myself literally fighting my way through the room. It wasn't the men I was fighting...it was the fear, dread or anxiety that came along with high-pressured situations. Psalm 118:6 so powerfully states, "The LORD is with me; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?" Once I realized the secret of entering the No Fear Zone, I was free to be me and walk into all that God has predestined for me. "For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship" (Romans 8:15).

Come join me in the No Fear Zone on your journey to empowerment.

A Weight Upon Your Back by DeAndrea Reyes



Carrying the cross at Mardi-Gras 2005

Carry the Cross is a special ministry with an unusual way of reaching out to people. The ministry's objective is to remind everyone (including themselves) of the price that Jesus paid when He died on the cross 2000 years ago, so that all will live for Him alone. They are seeking to remind those who have forgotten about the wonder of Jesus' great love for us, and to bring new people to Christ by telling His story to those who don't have a personal relationship with Him.

Carry the Cross was formulated when three young men gathered to pray through the night. Soon after their prayer meeting, there was a vision for the future and they knew they were being called to a time of ministry for their community and beyond. They describe their mission in the following way: Fire before us, Fire behind us! When a forest is engulfed by fire it is burned down to nothingness, leaving a seemingly barren and charred wasteland that is useless. However, after a period of time and when the rains have come, new life springs up all about. Out of the blackness sprouts up a magnificent array of colors and life and the forest returns ten-fold what it used to be before the fire. This can be compared to the heart of one who wishes to be closer to God. God engulfs our hearts in His own fire and starts life anew in us, making everything around us more wonderful and glorious.

Carry the Cross Ministries utilizes

volunteers which carry the cross in cities all across the United States and beyond its borders. So far they have reached fourteen US cities, Guatemala and Malawi, Africa, and have many more cross-carrying trips planned in the future. They have people in Los Angeles, CA, Kansas City, KS, Lawrence, KS, and Malawi, Africa who carry the cross regularly. Sometimes they carry the cross down a busy street praying for people to see the cross and remember Jesus. Other times they simply go to busy public places and just stand with the cross, praying for the city and waiting for people to approach so they can share Jesus with them and pray for them. By standing on street corners, carrying a huge cross, and praying for those around them, they are



reminding the community how Jesus gave His life for them. The sight of a man walking through the streets of New York carrying a huge cross is quite shocking, and definitely stands out to make a point.

In addition to carrying the cross around the world, the ministry also has a community outreach center that they call The Firehouse. Two of the Kansas City members, Justin Hoskins and Jason Neland, actually live in The Firehouse with their families. They host community get-togethers as well as provide apartment units for low-income families who are trying to get on their feet. An array of people have been hosted and ministered to. Most recently they hosted one woman who suffered from alcoholism and another who was in a physically abusive relationship. They also organize community BBQ's, block parties, concerts, bible studies and other events to reach out to their

community, and further show their own commitment to the community. So far The Firehouse has been a success, but it is still a work in progress. They plan on utilizing The Firehouse eventually for a daycare facility for low-income families as well as a Vacation Bible School ministry.



Carry the Cross Ministries is also involved in caring for the homeless in their area. They have taken a real dedication to these people and seek to help them in any way possible, including bringing Christmas gifts to them and simply being there if they need someone to talk to.

This ministry and its members are devoted to sharing the love of Jesus with their neighbors, far and near. They believe in relighting the fire that Jesus left for us and believe that we all should do as the book of Luke says and deny ourselves so that we may carry His cross daily.

To learn more about Carry the Cross or to make a donation to the ministry, visit www.carrythecross.com



Promoting Advocacy... *(continued from page 10)*

It's very humbling when people know who you are. When I was on *Surreal Life*, it affected a lot of people by exposing them to my life and how I suffered.

A: What advice would you give young females who are interested in the entertainment business?

J: The most important thing is to surround yourself with good people. When I began the business, I didn't know everything, so I was around drugs and things I knew were not right. The best thing you can do is to be true to yourself and surround yourself with the right people. It's important to stop and contemplate about your life and its direction. It's ok to be alone sometimes, so you can think.

A: Since you've experienced so many things in your past relationships, including abuse, do you see yourself in a relationship again?

J: Definitely. I am a relationship person, but it's difficult. It took me awhile to start dating again. And since I am in the public eye, it's hard for people to get involved. I don't know about family, since I have never had it.

A: Do you ever search the Internet and read the blogs or websites that many of your fans set up in your honor?

J: As of now, I do not. However, I am aware of one website called livingwonder.com, which is constantly keeping tabs on me and looks out for me. Even though I don't look at the sites, I'm very appreciate of my fans who take the time to do that.

A: Would you ever consider returning to professional wrestling?

J: I still receive offers all the time. And sometimes people say that I said I plan on returning. It's been eight years, and I will not return to wrestling. I am very proud of

what I have done, but I have grown and I am looking forward to future endeavors. But no, I will never go back.

A: What is next for Joanie Laurer?

J: After doing *Surreal Life Fame Games*, which airs on Vh1, I'm still looking for the right medium for me. I also have a film coming out titled, *Illegal Aliens*. In addition, my experience with *Surreal Life* has been so wonderful and I'm so appreciative to the Vh1 family. I want to continue to act and work with Vh1. I would also like to do more movies and perhaps do something in Las Vegas. And in a way I'm starting over, and it's very exciting. I believe because I am so unique that the right thing with my name on it has yet to come, but when it does it will be great.

On a side note, I would like to extend a special thank you to Ms. Laurer and her comments on social justice and human welfare. You can catch Ms. Laurer on Vh1's *Surreal Life Fame Game* and on the big screen in *Illegal Aliens*.

Setting Boundaries... *(continued from page 12)*

I think I've made my point - what can start out as innocent fun can quickly veer off the track and go so very wrong. It is hard enough dating and putting boundaries on a relationship, but if you let yourself go past that line you drew, it's very difficult re-establish those boundaries again in that same relationship and even harder to put boundaries on a relationship that's already in progress.

January 1st at 12:00am every single year marks a new beginning. On this date millions of people around the world are making resolutions. They are promising what they will and will not do. On this date, millions of people around the world are also pledging that they're not going to make a New Year's resolution because "they never last." I've got news for you. All things are possible with God (Mark 10:27).

Not sure what sort of boundaries you should be setting for yourself and your relationships? Here are a few examples to get you started.

- **Go on public dates with little or no time alone.** Go to dinner, spend time together with friends or at public events. Anything that allows you to spend time together and doesn't put any pressure on either of you for something physical to happen will do the trick.

- **Attend church together...**but wait until you've been together awhile (6 months at least) before starting devotions together because that can lead to premature intimacy. Premature intimacy is when a couple believes they are closer than they really are.

- **Set boundaries on physical contact.** Draw a line saying that you will hug or hold hands, but you won't snuggle under a blanket on the couch. Or you will kiss each other on the cheek, but not on the mouth. Make sure they are rules you can and will keep.

- **Write down your resolutions.** This way you can't hide from them. These are things that can change your life and remember: It's never too late to make resolutions!

Spend Your Christmas Holidays in Vienna

by Tiffany Simpson



Vienna is a beautiful and historic city nestled in the heart of Europe. It is easily accessible by most major European cities and provides a springboard to many other destinations such as Prague, Salzburg and Munich. The palaces of Vienna are some of the most magnificent in all of Europe and the surrounding areas along the Danube are popular places to visit during the summer.

Some tend to forget the beauty of Christmas and all that this season is supposed to mean. It's easy to become a Scrooge when everywhere you turn you see or hear something about Christmas - and it's only the beginning of November. Several years ago, I had the pleasure of spending 4 days right before Christmas in Vienna. It was a magical time and I was truly able to feel that Christmas spirit around us and to remember what this holiday is really all about. I savored the time I spent with my family there and we still talk about it years later.



CHRISTMAS SIGHTS & SOUNDS

• Christkindlmarkt

Those traveling or living in Europe know that many European cities have Christmas markets which are not to be overlooked if you have the opportunity to attend. The Christkindlmarkt in Vienna is one such Christmas market that will have you enjoying the holiday spirit all night long. The market opens the second week of November and is open until the third week of December and you can find it in front of the **Neues Rathaus** (Friedrich-Schmidt-Platz 1). You will find stands

selling hot punch or *Glühwein* (which is alcoholic although a non-alcoholic version is usually available - see Quick Tip #4), sausages and other foods, candy, trinkets and other Christmas goodies.



Stall after stall lines the narrow lanes of **Spittelberg** for its Christmas market. It is said that this is where the Christ Child (Christkind) himself often comes to shop. You can browse fine arts and crafts, ceramics, hand-blown glass, rugs, and much more.

If these two markets leave you wanting more, you can also visit the art market at **Heiligenkreuzerhof**, the arts and crafts market in front of the **Church of St. Charles Borromeo (Karlskirche)**, the Christmas Village at **Uni-Campus** or the traditional Christmas market on **Freyung square**.

Further Information:

www.christkindlmarkt.at

• Krippenschau (Nativity Show)

Nativity scenes have a long history in Austria, as well as a forbidden one: Emperor Josef II banned them in churches but then their presence increased in homes. The imperial ban has now been forgotten and many churches have lovingly crafted scenes on display.

The most beautiful ones can be seen in the crypt in St. Peter's church (**Peterskirche** - Petersplatz 6). You can view them from November until mid-December.

• Midnight Mass

If you'd like to attend midnight mass on Christmas Eve in Vienna in one of its most

QUICK TIPS

• **Quick Tip #1:** *Bitte rechts stehen.* If you are on an escalator anywhere, remember to always stand on the right side. Those in a hurry will want to pass you on the left (just like when driving a car) and if you happen to be standing in their way, they are very likely to rudely insist that you move to the side. This rule also applies to many other European countries such as Germany.

• **Quick Tip #2:** If you plan on eating in Vienna, and you certainly should, you can try one of the more traditional dishes such as *Wiener schnitzel*, *Kaiserschmarrn* (sweet pancakes with raisins), goulash or *Palatschinken* (Viennese crêpes). Austria is also famous for its coffee houses and the delicious cakes and pastries they serve.

• **Quick Tip #3:** German is the official language spoken in Austria. Like most German-speaking countries, Austrians have their own dialect. But to complicate things further, the Viennese actually have their own dialect which is primarily spoken only in Vienna. Even in Lower Austria, the state surrounding the city, many of its expressions are not used, while farther to the west they are often not even understood.

• **Quick Tip #4:** If you are visiting Vienna or Europe in general during Christmas-time and you see signs for **Glühwein** (pronounced "glue vine") be advised that this does usually contain alcohol and lots of it. *Glühwein* is a punch concocted of brandy, red wine, sugar and spices. It will certainly get your blood pumping and warm

Places to Go in Vienna

you up on a cold winter night but no drinking and driving! If you'd like to try *Glüwein* but you don't drink, just look for *Kinderpunsch* which is a non-alcoholic version.

RECOMMENDED READING

Travel Guides

- The Rough Guide to Vienna by Rob Humphries, Rough Guides, 2005. [ISBN: 1843534118]
- Vienna (Eyewitness Travel Guides) by DK Publishing, DK Travel 2003. [ISBN: 0789495759]
- Lonely Planet Vienna by Neal Bedford, Jane Rawson and Richard Nebesky, Lonely Planet Publications, 2004. [ISBN: 1741041996]
- Streetwise Vienna (Streetwise) by Streetwise Maps Streetwise Maps, 1996. [ISBN: 0935039813]
- Fodor's Vienna's 25 Best (25 Best) by Fodor's, Fodor's, 2006. [ISBN: 1400016398]
- Fodor's Vienna to Salzburg (Fodor's Gold Guides) by Fodor's, Fodor's, 2005. [ISBN: 1400014751]
- Time Out: Hong Kong, Macau and Guangzhou by Time Out, Time Out Group Ltd., 2005. [ISBN: 1904978819]

Learn German

- Rick Steves' German Phrase Book and Dictionary by Rick Steves, Avalon Travel Publishing, 2003. [ISBN: 1566915198]
- The Rough Guide to German Dictionary Phrasebook 2: Dictionary Phrasebook (Rough Guide Phrasebooks) by Lexus, Rough Guides, 2000. [ISBN: 1858286107]



well known cathedrals, look no further than **Stephansdom** (Stephansplatz 3). Although no tickets are needed, you must arrive rather early in order to get a seat. Perhaps you won't understand every word being said, but you should at least be able to appreciate celebrating this wonderful holiday in a beautiful church.

TOUR VIENNA IN STYLE

• Do It On A Segway?

Most people have heard of Segways but few have ever been on one. But if you are interested to see Vienna in a somewhat unusual way, contact City Segway Tours for a guided tour of this beautiful city via Segway. The tour of virtually every important site in Vienna lasts 3-4 hours and they also provide a 45-minute introduction course to the Segway for those who have never been on one or need to re-familiarize themselves with the gadget.

Further Information:

www.parissegwaytours.com/vienna/



• Carriage Ride

For a more down-to-earth tour of Vienna, you can take a *Fiaker* (open horse-drawn carriages) around the city. You can arrange for a tour or they will take you from point to point. *Fiakers* can be found at **Stephansplatz**, **Heldenplatz** and

Albertinaplatz. Remember to negotiate the price before you get in to avoid any problems later on and if you're there during the winter, dress very warmly and don't forget the hot chocolate.



• Other Tour Options

For those who prefer a more conventional tour, there are also guided walking (primarily during the summer), bus and tram tours.

For those who like to guide themselves, tram lines 1 and 2 will take you to the majority of the main sights around the Ringstrasse and will provide connections to other trams which go to locations a bit further out. Or a guided tour in a 1920's tram can also be arranged which leaves from Otto Wagner's Karlsplatz Pavilions. **Further Information about public transport:** www.wien.gv.at/english/transportation/publictrans.htm

MUSEUMS TO SEE



• The Belvedere Palaces

If you are a museum buff and love art of all styles, Vienna is a wonderful city to visit to see some incredible collections. Not only are the works of art inside the buildings amazing to look at but the buildings themselves and the gardens surrounding them are often just as lovely. **The Belvedere** is one such museum. The two palaces of Belvedere, Upper

Things to Eat in Vienna

and Lower, are linked by a formal garden. Mostly 19th and 20th century art is housed in the Upper Belvedere while the Lower is occupied by the Museums of Austrian Baroque and Medieval Art up to the 18th century.

Further Information: www.belvedere.at

• **Kunsthistorisches Museum**

An immense collection of European paintings and other pieces of art, the **Kunsthistorisches Museum** (Maria-Theresia-Platz) is a delight for any art lover. A primary portion of the museum is devoted to Flemish, German, Dutch and Italian paintings in addition to the other European works it houses. There is also a large collection of Oriental and Egyptian antiquities, a collection of Greek and Roman antiquities and a collection of coins and medals. The majority of the works were collected by the Hapsburg family which ruled over Vienna for many centuries.

Further Information: www.khm.at

• **Visit the Crown Jewels**

Those wishing to view some of the imperial jewels and relics of the Holy Roman Empire can visit **Hofburg**, the **State Apartments and Treasuries**. Treasures amassed during the Hapsburg rule are showcased in 21 rooms and one can also visit the former living quarters of past rulers.

Further Information: www.hofburg.wien.info

SATISFY YOUR TASTE BUDS



• **The Naschmarkt**

Open Monday – Friday from 6am until 6:30pm, the **Naschmarkt** is one great place to visit if you're hungry or planning

a dinner. Some of the stands have been in place for many years while others are newer and more temporary. Not only will you find fresh produce, meats, flowers, wines and breads, but there are also many flea market type stalls selling a wide variety of goods. As you walk west, the market gradually loses its structure and the less established stalls are found furthest west. On the east side, you can also find many snack bars serving fast food type meals to eat on the go.

Further Information (in German): www.wienernaschmarkt.eu



• **Hotel Sacher**

Although you can stay at **Hotel Sacher** (Philharmonikerstrasse 4) as well as eat there, it is absolutely a 5-star hotel with the price tag to match. But if you've heard about the famous Sachertorte and just want to visit the hotel to try it out and perhaps bring one home with you, visit their restaurant where you can enjoy an entire meal or just coffee and cake. What is a Sachertorte you might be wondering? It's a rich chocolate cake, covered in a thick jacket of milk chocolate with a layer of apricot jam hiding just under the surface.

Further Information: www.sacher.com

OUT AND ABOUT

Although these sites are located a bit outside the city, they should be included on your list of things to see because they simply are worth it.

• **The Ferris Wheel at The Prater**

The Prater is an enormous park between the Danube and its canal which used to be imperial hunting grounds and was opened to the public in 1766. Here

RECOMMENDED WEBSITES

- **Vienna Tourist Board**
<http://info.wien.at>
- **Virtual Vienna Net**
www.virtualvienna.net
- **City of Vienna Webservice**
www.wien.gv.at/english
- **AboutVienna.org Guide**
www.aboutvienna.org



NEW YEAR'S EVE IN VIENNA

As the temperature drops, the party heats up. Vienna on New Year's Eve is a sight to behold, with thousands of people on the streets, wending their way from one open-air spectacle to the next, unless they are attending one of the concerts or galas, or enjoying a tour of the city. Firecrackers explode all night, sparkling wine and punch flows, and the mood of the crowd bubbles over with exuberance. New Year's Eve in Vienna is a loud and merry time. This is no accident, but the enactment of an established tradition. In the fourth century Pope Silvester, after whom the night is named in Austria, tried to purge the new Christian church of heathen customs, but the old gods proved to be extremely stubborn. They kept on returning in the form of scheming devils, evil spirits or artful demons, digging their way into people's souls until the man of God realized that one devil best drives out another and using the old beliefs announced that the

Sights to See in Vienna

only thing they couldn't stand was noise. This is the reason why New Year is heralded in with pyrotechnics, firecrackers and loud bangs to make sure it is free of dark spirits.

Downtown Vienna follows Pope Silvester's instructions with particular enthusiasm. The romantic alleys, elegant shopping streets and squares are metamorphosed into a pulsing party arena. Thousands of people follow the New Year's Eve Trail, stopping off for sparkling wine, punch and snacks as they make their way from one attraction to the next. There are marquees, live performances and entertainment all over the place, and the louder it gets, the more confident the people of Vienna can be that the evil spirits are being driven out.

As midnight approaches, the masses migrate towards St. Stephen's Cathedral. Just before the old year comes to an end, the music stops and the countdown begins, culminating in the booming chimes of the 'Pummerin' from the cathedral bell tower, to the accompaniment of Strauss's *Blue Danube Waltz* as midnight passes. Then the sparkling wine corks pop and complete strangers joyfully wish each other a Happy New Year full of luck and happiness. And to get the year off to a good start, the crowds carry on partying until the early hours of the morning.



you will find a planetarium, golf course, convention center, swimming pool, soccer stadium, racetrack, the three-mile-long *Hauptallee* through the center of it all and, of course, an enormous amusement park with rides, booths, beer gardens and the infamous Ferris Wheel. The Ferris Wheel moves about 2 ½ feet per second and gives amazing views over the park, fair and the city. You can take a ride year-round although the opening times do vary based on the time of year.

Further Information: www.prater.at/



• Schönbrunn Palace and Gardens

A former summer residence of the imperial family, this magnificent property is astounding in its size alone. Although the palace itself is certainly worth touring, the grounds with their beautiful gardens, historical zoo, tropical greenhouse, coach museum and magnificent statues is equally impressive. Inside the palace you will find room upon room of ornamental woodwork with ornate tapestries and paneling.

If you happen to be here during Christmas, you can also visit their Christmas market or perhaps catch one of the daily Advent concerts held in front of the Palace.

Further Information about the Palace: www.schoenbrunn.at

Further Information about the Christmas Market: www.weihnachtsmarkt.co.at/



• River Trip from Krems to Melk

If you have the time to venture even further outside Vienna, you can find some of the loveliest stretches of river scenery in Europe just 50 miles west of Vienna in a region called the **Wachau**. All along the Danube Valley are many wonderful castles, churches, monasteries and wine-producing villages full of delectable food and drink. Rather inexpensive shopping can also be found in Krems. Drive yourself, bicycle, take a train or take a river trip with an organized tour service such as Cityrama, Vienna Line, Vienna Sightseeing or DDSG Shipping.

MORE TO SEE & DO

Vienna is nice to visit at any time of the year. And if you'd like to see more of Austria, you can also visit places like Salzburg or Innsbruck.

If you happen to be there during the winter, you can make use of the many **ski and snowboard** resorts. The Arlberg region, for example, was the birthplace of modern Alpine Skiing and is frequented by European royalty as well as the commonfolk.

If you prefer to visit Austria during the summer and like the outdoors, why not visit the Austrian Alps for some **hiking or cycling**.

Or perhaps you'd like to just stay in the wine-growing regions and sample the **food and fine wine**.

Give all of your senses a delicious treat with a trip to Austria.



The staff of Lifted Magazine would like to wish you a very Merry Christmas, the Happiest of Holidays and all the blessings the New Year could possibly bring.

May the Good Lord fulfill you with His promises and bestow on you His many blessings. Let the spirit of love gently fill our hearts and homes. In this loveliest of seasons may you find many reasons for happiness.