

Out of the Mouths of Babes

by Ellen Hindman



Rachel was only three years old, our only child at the time. Her daddy was in his first year of study at seminary and we were a long drive from any family. The holiday season was approaching and we three were going to spend Christmas in our own little apartment for the very first time, just we three. God had placed His call to foreign mission work on our lives and we realized that our first Christmas in our own home was the time to begin our own Christmas traditions. Because my husband and I had come to know Jesus as our Lord and Savior together, on the same night, just five years previously, and because Christmas is, after all, supposed to be the celebration of His humble birth into this world, we decided to take a pass on all the hoopla that comes with adding Santa Claus into the picture and to keep our focus on Jesus; we would have a birthday party for Him. Two things in particular that occurred as we prepared for that first Christmas in our own home are precious memories to this day and are firmly entrenched in our traditions. A birthday party means cake, right? But what cake could be special enough to be our birthday cake for Jesus? I prayed and put that question to our Heavenly Father and He gave me the answer in Isaiah 1:18: “Though your sins are as scarlet, they will be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they will be like wool.” Those words represented the very essence of the reason Jesus came to earth. We are all sinners in need

of a savior. In answer to my prayer, the words brought to my mind red velvet cake; creamy, snow-white frosting covering crimson red cake, distinctive and symbolic. Today there may not be anything that special or unique about red velvet cake, but in 1980, it was not an everyday kind of cake. There was not a bakery or cupcake shop on every corner selling them and certainly not boxed cake mixes to facilitate the process of homemade. I would venture to say that in that day, few were those who had seen, tasted, or even heard of red velvet cake. With the decision made for Jesus' birthday cake, it was time to choose some gifts. The day arrived for Rachel and me to do our Christmas shopping. Our budget was limited and we had to visit many stores to find just the right items at just the right prices. Throughout the long day, one question was posed to Rachel multiple times by multiple strangers, shopkeepers and shoppers alike, "What is Santa going to bring you for Christmas?" Each time she was asked, Rachel would look up at me with questioning eyes. Each time I would say to her, "Tell them what we are going to do." "We're going to have a birthday party for Jesus," she would cheerfully reply. Most times that answer stopped people in their tracks. I believe that God orchestrated things so that as hand in hand we were leaving the last store that day and the same question was put to Rachel one last time, she looked up at me and spoke words that I will never forget, "Mommy, these people don't know what Christmas is all about." I don't remember if I cried then, but the retelling of the story every year before we cut the cake always brings tears to my eyes. Two brothers eventually joined Rachel to blow out the candles on Jesus' birthday cake. All three of them are now grown and married. Rachel and her husband have twelve children of their own. Every Christmas our red velvet cake is still topped with a trinity of candles to be blown out now by the grandchildren who always wonder if Jesus will blow them out (as we sing Happy Birthday) before they do. Yes, we celebrated Jesus' birthday that year in our own little apartment with birthday cake and grateful hearts for God's greatest gift to humankind. But we weren't just three. The Guest of Honor was present in our lives then, as now, and He will never leave us nor forsake us.