Examine Christmas
By Bill Williamson

I wonder again this year at the awesomeness of the universe. It is filled with amazing events, and all recorded for our examination. But do we examine them? No! Largely we do not examine them. We view them. We discuss them. We agree with them. We disagree with them. But, we do not examine them.

What do I mean by ‘examine them’?

Even now as I type this document, I gaze out the sliding glass door of my apartment. I see dark shades of late afternoon sunshine displayed upon reddish brown seed pods, I presume that is what they are, as they dangle from the fine limbs of the Ash tree that produced them. They form a picture that is very hard to duplicate, even with the best photographic equipment.

I dabbled in photography for a while some years back. I spent much time trying to duplicate scenes on film that God had created for us to enjoy. I was rarely successful. When I occasionally succeeded, (only in my mind), there was much room for improvement.

The white bark, speckled with blacks spots randomly up and down the tree trunk, shines beautifully in the sunlight. The limbs that project from the trunk are a reddish charcoal color in this late winter sunlight. The tiny pods, for lack of a better term, hang in ordered testimony of the life held within the tree. The tiny pods when gently blown from the tree in the night wind, come to rest upon my deck flooring. As I strike them with the broom to remove them, they explode into hundreds of tiny seed like particles. Whether they are actually seeds or not, I do not know. There is my point.

I am fifty-six years old and have never taken the time to examine these small pods. Even now I do not. I simply sit here at my computer and look outside into the cold wintery air at them. Earlier today I swept the deck and noticed that they burst apart when swept up.

What would happen if I would stop to examine everything I encounter in this life? Wow! Or even a small percentage of what I encountered?

The large Redwood tree behind the Ash towers above everything around it. It looms beyond and skyward from a multitude of apartment decks. It stood here long before these apartments were formed as an idea. How many have looked at it and never examined it? I am in that category.

The Redwood and the myriad of Maples, Alders, and other type of trees gathered around it, are all fed by the rich soil lying beneath them, and watered by the rushing little stream that winds through them. The stream crosses beneath two lanes of a paved roadway a short distance away. About eight hundred cars an hour, on a slow afternoon, pass above the stream. They are most likely not even aware there is a stream there. And those ‘who do’ could really care less, and won’t stop and examine it.

Where does this little stream come from and where does it go? What lives in it? What lives
I know a pond near here where I walk with a friend and her dog sometimes. That pond is so alive with creatures, it is amazing. As we walk and talk we sometimes miss what is there. But other times we walk, talk, and watch. Then we see; ducks, Herons, Nutrias, water snakes, and more. We see babies’ of each of these species. We watch the Nutria and ducks feed amongst the pond’s moss growing up from the bottom. We find trees cut down by the Nutria, and find where they have dragged the limbs into the pond to feed upon and build with. We watch Herons stalk through the shallow water looking for a morsel to fill its stomach. We also see man’s traps set to rid the pond area of the Nutria. We wonder why the tree is more important than the Nutria.

The pond I just described is located in the hills just west of Portland, Oregon. The pond is surrounded by man’s development. Housing developments cover the countryside. And more are being built. They are nice homes and beautiful developments in a wonderful setting. But I wonder how many there slow down to examine their created neighbors.

My friend’s dog, Cody, never misses a chance to examine things. She strains at the leash to get into the bushes, the trees, the water’s edge. She wants to put her nose to everything. Her nose is designed to examine. And examine Cody does. She would gladly spend the day examining if allowed to do so. Sometimes she will stand alert, ears upright, nose twitching, and watch out over the pond. Or gaze up into a tree where she saw a squirrel scamper off to. And if another dog comes into view, she about goes ballistic. She simply wants to go and examine and make a friend.

We can learn from Cody.

We celebrate Christmas every year. We race about, to do all that is required, barely finishing in time for the day we set aside to remember Jesus. Often it simply becomes a day of rest because we are worn out by the process of preparing to celebrate rather than the celebrating itself.

Maybe we could examine the holiday and what we make of it. Maybe there is much more there than what we see racing through it. Maybe like the little pod, it comes from something with much life in it. Maybe the holiday has a life source. Maybe like the pond, the holiday is teeming with life. Maybe close examination of the reason for the holiday would result in much more life in us.

Maybe there is more for us to discover. Just maybe...