The Making of Snowflakes

While Christmas is still 15 days away, early speculation – or better, perhaps, hope – about another white Christmas, such as we in Southeast Tennessee experienced last year, is emerging. Could it be that we might wake up on that blessed holiday to look out the window and see the ground covered in snow for the second year in a row?

Maybe, but it's a long shot, especially in our geographic location where it doesn't snow much in the wintertime.

Snowflakes are often used as symbols representing winter or cold conditions. They are traditional seasonal images for the Christmas period, and regularly represent a white Christmas. The complex shapes of snowflakes have confounded scientists for centuries.

In the past, scientists thought that the making of a snowflake was a two-step process. They believed that inside the winds of a winter storm, a microscopic speck of dust would become trapped in a molecule of water vapor. Scientists suggested that this particle would then become heavily frosted with droplets of super-cooled water and plunge to earth. During its descent, the varying temperature and humidity would sculpt the heavy, icy crystal into a lacy snowflake. Or at least that's what scientists used to believe.

In recent decades, the true formation of the snowflake was discovered. Very few snowflakes actually contain dust or other particles. Dr. John Hallett of the University of Nevada discovered that the majority of snowflakes are formed from fragments of other snowflakes. As snowflakes are formed, extremely dry or cold air causes them to break up into smaller parts. The small fragments then act as seeds for new snowflakes to develop. Most of snow is made, therefore, by snow!

In like manner, friendly people generate friends. Their neighborly outlook inspires others to reach out and be friendly, too.

Pass along the seed of friendship, and watch what develops in your own life.

The sweet smell of perfume and oils is pleasant, and so is good advice from a friend (Proverbs 27:9).

– Beecher Hunter