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A NEW LIFE BECKONS



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JEFF WILLHELM/Staff



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Charles Babb, owner of Hudson Jewelry, is selling it all and answering the call to minister.

Jeweler answers a call as old as the millennium

He'll sell the business and start a youth ministry

By **ADAM BELL**
Staff Writer

HUDSON — Charles Babb realized he needed to minister to troubled youths, then resisted the idea for a year and a half.

He quit going to church. Threw himself into his job so much he missed tucking his son into bed for a whole month. Nothing seemed to work.

So in September, he gave in. The Hudson Jewelry owner would end his 20-year career, the only job he's ever known, and try to help children through the church.

He recognizes it's a drastic lifestyle change for him as well as for his wife, Susan, and their two children. He and Susan will close their

store in the Fairway Shopping Center on Jan. 15.

"I knew deep, deep in my heart I should be in full-time service to the Lord," said Babb, 37. "That sort of eats at you."

So what happened?

Two years ago, he was floundering at work. Despite the store's success, Babb repeatedly cited his unhappiness with the job. Plans to expand the business collapsed when a woman abruptly backed out of a deal to sell him property. Another opportunity to get into a different store soon slipped through his hands.

Away from the store, Babb worked with a youth group at his church, Harris Chapel Baptist

Church & Christian Academy in Hudson. He sensed a calling to help the teens, make a difference in their lives. He sees a desperate need for guidance and understanding in the ones he works with, people who seem lost.

At this point, Babb said he felt the Lord tugging at him to do something with his life other than make money. There was no revelatory moment. Babb described a gradual understanding, a gnawing feeling that something needed to change.

Yet he resisted for so long, he said, because the jewelry business was a way of life for him.

Finally, he made up his mind. "It

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FROM THE FRONT

Answering a call as old as the millennium

BABB from IV

felt like a ton of bricks was lifted off my psyche," Babb said.

Vic Alexander works for a manufacturer who supplies jewelry to the store. He's helping Babb run Hudson Jewelry in its final days.

"You gotta admire a fellow who makes a tough decision to walk away from a very successful business," Alexander said. "I don't know if I'd have the guts. It shows what type of person he is."

The going-out-of-business sale began in October. During the holi-

day season, Babb logged 80-hour weeks.

Babb will miss his customers, many of whom he said are Christians who wished him well. Despite selling jewelry, he still felt conflicted over what he saw as the commercialization and self-centeredness people exhibit during Christmas.

He's looking forward to a long hiking trip on the Appalachian Trail after the store closes, where he'll find time to pray and reflect on the seismic shift in his life.

Then Babb plans to go to a Durham seminary. After that, who

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CHARLES BABB

knows.

"I haven't got a clue. Wherever the Lord puts me," he said.

When Babb opened Hudson Jewelry 12 years ago, his merchandise fit into two showcases. The store now occupies 2,500 square feet. People can get every-

thing from jewelry repairs to \$15,000, two-carat solitaire diamond.

Babb called it a nice retail business that provides a high profit margin. But what about the money? Will he miss it?

It's a question Babb has fielded from a number of people. If money was all the world had to offer, he responds, he would remain in the jewelry business.

"All the money in the world is not going to buy your way into Heaven," he said.

The funds the family has earned is enough to survive on.

They are prepared to sell the house or their two cars, a Dodge pickup and a Mercedes, if they need to.

"I can't serve two masters, the Lord and business," Babb said. "I have to serve the master that matters."