



“... God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ ...”

Galatians 6:14

**DECEMBER 2015**

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Purpose of Calvary Messenger is:  
 To propagate sound Biblical doctrine;  
 To stimulate a deeper study of God's Word;  
 To anchor and fortify the faith of Christians;  
 To point lost and dying souls to Christ the Savior;  
 To welcome prodigals back to the fold and family of God;  
 And to help defeated Christians find victory in Christ Jesus.

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## There's a Song in the Air

*Josiah G. Holland*

There's a song in the air! There's a star in the sky!  
There's a mother's deep prayer and a baby's low cry!  
And the star rains its fire while the beautiful sing,  
For the manger of Bethlehem cradles a King!

There's a tumult of joy o'er the wonderful birth,  
For the Virgin's sweet boy is the Lord of the earth.  
Ay! the star rains its fire while the beautiful sing,  
For the manger of Bethlehem cradles a King!

In the light of that star lie the ages impearled;  
And that song from afar has swept over the world.  
Every hearth is aflame and the beautiful sing,  
In the homes of the nations that Jesus is King!

We rejoice in the light and we echo the song  
That comes down through the night from the heavenly throng.  
Ay! we shout to the lovely evangel they bring,  
And we greet in His cradle our Savior and King! 

## Joy—Confidence in God

*In a recent phone call, I felt that the man I was talking to was nearly “drowning” in discouragement. I feared that he was letting those who had let him down set his outlook. The following thoughts are what I believe is given to us about traveling the highway of holiness with joy.*

**W**e enjoy meeting people who are upbeat. I don’t mean giddy or even witty. I mean that they are genuinely joyful and pleasant to be with. They seem settled. They look to God. They don’t blame others for their problems. Their eyes are focused on Jesus and heaven.

Our faith forebears amazed and frustrated their critics so much that many of them were killed. So great was some martyrs’ confidence in God that they walked joyfully to their deaths.

No matter how deep our sorrow, God would give His joy to us. When we go into the battles of life focused on our problems instead of God’s provision, our joy evaporates. Let us not doubt or despair. God’s Word assures us that victorious joy is the Christian’s birthright! Even we ordinary folks can be calmly confident of God’s goodness.

### **In Nehemiah’s Day**

The Jews returning from Babylon

(Nehemiah 1) had gone through 70 years of galling slavery. Their masters showed little sympathy for them by working them mercilessly hard. Then God laid His hand on Nehemiah and told him to return to Jerusalem to organize rebuilding the city wall that lay in ruins. Such news brought new hope to these displaced people.

Finally, with God’s blessing, in spite of ridicule and plots to overthrow the project, rebuilding the city’s walls was actually accomplished in 52 days. Having the city rebuilt and ready for occupancy was almost too good to be true. Seemingly, facing life with sadness and despair had become such a habit, it was their default setting.

As the Jewish people (in Nehemiah 8) gathered for the dedication of the repaired city walls, Ezra and his helpers read the Scriptures to the gathered crowd. “**...they read the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading,**” which was an excellent situation for the new day

to which God had brought them.

But something was still missing. The pull of their sad past had to be faced. With encouragement, they could face their pessimism! We see them reaching out in faith to God when they affirmed the words of God that Ezra read to them, with **“Amen! Amen!”** They bowed low to the ground and worshiped.

As they reached out to God, their reverence was further expressed by weeping when God’s law was read to them. Nehemiah encouraged them with: You don’t need to continue in this mode of sadness and despair. **“Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared: for *this day is holy unto our Lord, neither be ye sorry; for the joy of the LORD is your strength*”** (Nehemiah 8:10 Italics mine).

Having faced their spiritual poverty, they were reminded to revel in God’s marvelous and bountiful grace.

### **The Focus That Brings Us Joy**

What we see depends largely on what we look for. If that seems too simple, consider what the Holy Spirit said through Paul in Philippians 4:1-8. He addresses his Christian brothers as his “brethren dearly beloved” and refers to them as his “joy and crown.” Then he places before them what might be called a ladder for joy in the Lord. The first step up on this ladder is steadfast faith. Then he prodded two women to step up onto the next rung (get along with each

other). Going on up the ladder are the rungs rejoicing in the Lord, living in unashamed moderation, embracing worry-free trust in God’s goodness because regular, faith-filled prayer provides worry-free climbing so that the peace of God fills one’s soul. Don’t stop there, but beware of worry and fear; they destroy our delight in God. The ladder goes even higher. We are to take the next steps going up with what is true, honest, just, pure, lovely, of good report, virtuous, and praiseworthy—these steps go ever higher and take us onto an elevated vista of Christian joy! Things look much different from that altitude!

It is not wise, however, to ignore evil as though it did not exist, but we can tell it to Jesus and go on rejoicing! Furthermore, to think that evil could not tempt us is sheer folly. “Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall” (1 Corinthians 10:12). But we have a Shepherd who works in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure. He provides what we cannot produce in ourselves. When we open our spirits to His Spirit, we are given needed strength to hold forth the word of life. (See Phil. 2:13-16)

Let us claim our birthright—JOY. Let us commit our difficulties to God! It matters not if we are slandered, distrusted, misunderstood, called ugly names or persecuted in some other way. His peace has the power to keep our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. That comes when we turn everything over to the Captain of

our salvation who was made perfect through suffering. (See Hebrews 2:9 and 10). That's when His joy—real joy—is ours! Hallelujah!

• • • • •

December has its annual indexes, so space for other material is reduced. For that reason, David L. Miller did

not contribute to “Observations” this month. Ronald Miller offers several items of interest there for your consideration and David is continuing, at a reader’s request, a further article on “Conservative Anabaptists on Trial.”

-PLM



## *Announcements*

**“One generation shall praise thy works to another, and shall declare thy mighty acts” (Psalm 145:4)**

**10th Annual Conservative Anabaptist School Board Institute to be held on March 4th and 5th, 2016 at Martindale Mennonite Church, Ephrata, PA.**

**This institute is planned for ministers, school board members, and principals—anyone involved with the overall planning and operation of our Christian day schools.**

**Some of the scheduled main addresses include:**

- **Our story—Whence are These Stones? (Considering the vision of our founders as we face the future.)**
- **The Principal Tasks—What, how, and when? (How a busy teaching principal can accomplish his tasks.)**
- **The Board Demonstration. (watch a school board in action as they discuss typical issues.)**
- **Why Teach Algebra? (What’s the status of a subject that doesn’t seem to be practical?)**
- **Identifying the Common Problems of Education and Business**
- **Panel Discussion**
- **What Will Be Your Story?**

**Some choices of sectional topics planned are:**

- **Guarding Pure Relationships**
- **Challenges of Secondary Education**
- **Providing Leadership without Meddling (for ministers)**

- Above Reproach: Financial Legalities
- How to Help the Struggling Teacher
- Teacher-Preacher Dilemma (peculiar issues faced by teacher/preachers)
- Special Needs Students: Issues and Resources
- Purposeful Parent-Teacher Meetings.

Programs will be mailed in early January. If you have any questions or comments on the program, contact someone on the planning committee:

Allen Beiler 540-337-4106, Victor Ebersole 540-532-0127, Lee Lehman 717-263-9710, Mark Miller 330-231-6664, Jonas Sauder 717-285-3405

You may email questions, suggestions, or requests to be put onto the mailing list to: [casbinstitute@gmail.com](mailto:casbinstitute@gmail.com).

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### CASP ANNOUNCEMENT

In consultation with Dathan Stoltzfus, I find the following prospects for CASP in Hutchinson, KS, next year. He reports that openings for the January, 2016, CASP project have been filled. However, as of this date (Oct. 28) most of the positions for February and March projects are still unfilled.

Bro. Dathan is eager to hear from you at 585-237-3519 or 585-259-2098.

David L. Miller

## reader response

### Re: October, 2015, Reader Response

Did you notice the comment? “I suspect we have few hymn writers among us because we worship little”.

Well, here is something to sing about! Recently a new collection of hymns written and published by conservative Anabaptist people has been published.

*Hymns of Faith* is a nice hardbound hymnal containing 506 hymns, with about 10% being old favorites and the rest composed in recent years by Old Order Mennonites and other conservative Anabaptists, carefully selected to promote sound doctrine and excellence of musical quality.

*Hymns of Faith* was published in Canada by Vineyard Publications, but US customers can obtain the book from Green Pastures Press at 50 Green Pastures Lane, Mifflin, Pennsylvania, 17058. Price per book is \$22.95, plus \$2.05 shipping. PA residents add \$1.50 tax. Or you might inquire at your local plain book store.

It's a new songbook with 506 hymns, compiled by Markham

Mennonites of Ontario—

- Most of the songs were written in recent years by Christians with a conservative faith.

- Selections were carefully reviewed with an attempt to promote songs which support a close walk with our Savior and encourage us to seek to be unspotted from the world.

- Songs of praise, songs of inspiration, songs that encourage a Christ-like walk, songs of eternal life, of marriage, of bereavement...

- Shaped notes and four-part harmony are used throughout. 592 pages. Hardbound.

Don Martin

Green Pastures Press

Mifflin, PA



## Healing the Relationship Drought

*Dathan Stoltzfus, Perry, NY*

In response to “Reader Response” in September, 2015, of *Calvary Messenger*, regarding relationships the home, the sister who wrote is certainly not the only one thinking about and struggling with this.

As a father with five sons and three daughters, I am intensely interested in this subject. For some time now I have been on a personal journey of learning about myself and how to better relate to my wife and children. I have not arrived (truthfully, none of us ever will) but I have learned that

I was making some grave mistakes along the way. I am sharing all of this from the perspective of a beggar still becoming aware of his own need and looking for answers to fill that need.

Some years ago, I was first made aware of my lack when my wife said to me, “We should go for marriage counseling.” Oh, really? I was shocked! I thought we had an average to great marriage, with a few disagreements along the way. Another comment she made was “Sometimes it feels as if you don’t really love me.” Again, I

wondered what she meant by that, because I thought I did love her.

As I pondered what she said and tried to understand it all, I began looking for answers. I have come to realize that our wives are often much better able to evaluate our marriages than we men are. Unfortunately, in the name of leadership and because of our own naivete, most times we don't listen when they very gently say, "Honey, our marriage needs some help." Certainly, if there is a problem, we don't want anyone else to find out about it. We also tend to think other couples don't have problems.

Some months ago, while I was on a short weekend stay at my parents' house in PA, I picked up a book they had on the bookshelf, entitled, *Every Woman's Desire*. I took it back home to finish reading it the following week and what I learned was a life-changer for me. The fruit of what I learned is very slowly taking our marriage to a whole new level of joy. For us, the journey is at times brutal, suffering crushing defeats that take some time to mend, but we are clearly seeing slow but steady changes in our marriage.

Mention was made in the September article of the high percentage of abuse and poor relationships in our homes. Based on research, and certainly backed by what our Bible schools and our voluntary service units are finding, it seems that insecurity and emotional instability in children often points to the lack of relationship with Dad, the child is not secure and well-adjusted in other areas of life, with

that insecurity often revealing itself in poor—sometimes awkward—ways of relating to others.

When I was first made aware of how widespread a problem this is among us, I was a bit shocked and began to muse on what may be causing it. I have been hearing it repeatedly since, and am giving it quite a bit of thought. In recent months, as I studied and taught about marriage (because of my own deep need), the following questions keep coming to me: "Is there a possibility that the lack in father/child relationships is really rooted in a lack in our marriages? If a father is constantly hurting his children by his lack of relationship with them, is it not likely that his marriage is suffering as well?"

I wonder, as we search for answers to the dad/child problem and the insecurities we see in our children as a result, are we missing the real problem by focusing first on the parent/child relationship? While I have no doubt that the relationship of the father to his sons and daughters is a large part of the problem, possibly we need to back up and focus first on healing our marriages. Is there any one factor that can bring more security to a child than when Mom and Dad are obviously in love with each other and are experiencing a true spiritual and emotional oneness?

I know a man who has raised five very well-adjusted and confident daughters, and I recently heard him say that he is frequently asked, "What did you do to raise such amazing

daughters?” He said this, “Honestly, my wife and I scratch our heads. We weren’t that great as parents. What we *did do* was that we fiercely loved one another. That’s about all we can point to. We just put one another as our ultimate priority, even over the kids, and we just loved each other in front of them. That’s the only thing we can point to.”

It seems to me that if the marriage is truly what it could be, the wife will be free to point out where her husband may be hurting his children, and they will no doubt be working on it *together*.

Dad, I have some questions for you:

**Do you truly hear the heartbeat of your wife, both as it relates to her assessment of your marriage and in her assessment of your relationship with your children?**

It seems to me that this is one of our weak spots as men. Because we are goal-oriented, because we know we are called to be the leader in the home, and because it makes us feel weak when someone points out our faults, we generally make sure our wife isn’t too free to share her heart with us. Or, we may never have given her a chance to really share her heart, therefore we are blissfully ignorant of our real problems. Our wives can be a mirror for us, reflecting back to us how we really appear, and in many cases, the picture won’t be a pretty one. After more than 20 years of marriage, I finally began to understand just a little bit more how a woman really thinks, how much listening and

communicating it takes to cultivate a healthy marriage, and what love really is in a woman’s language. We usually think that if there is peace, all is well. However, a woman needs much more than that. She needs an emotional connection or she won’t feel loved. Ephesians 5 says that a man who loves his wife is actually loving himself. Your love will come back many-fold. Please hear your wife!

**Do you trust your wife like the man in Proverbs 31:11? “The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil (gain).”**

I recently heard someone say, “Trust may be more important than love.” I think that is more important than we have given it credit. Yes, there are cases where a wife simply cannot be trusted due to emotional or spiritual problems, but a large majority of us have a wife who really is virtuous. I cringe when I see a man treating his wife as though she cannot write a check properly, or implying that she is stupid in business, and so on. Our wives in many cases have better business sense than we men do and many a man would have been spared much grief and thousands of lost dollars if he just listened to his wife when he got excited about a new business venture. Remember, you are one flesh and when you were dating, she was your queen. Why do you now treat her as though she were one of the children?

**Would you as a father be pleased if your son-in-law treated your**

## **daughter the way you treat your wife?**

I believe this question alone, if we asked it of ourselves every day would completely revolutionize our treatment of our wives. Though we may at times have a lack of respect for or emotional connection with our daughters, even an average father has an instinct of love and protection when it comes to the treatment given to his daughter. Not just “any dude will do.” We value our daughters and usually we see them as our little princesses. As mentioned above, I have little doubt that when you were dating the fine girl who is now your wife, you treated her like a queen. You craved and longed for her love and wooed her heart accordingly. Now please tell me, “Why did you stop doing that after you were married?” There may be exceptions, but in nearly every case you can once again awaken the spark in the heart of your bride and again experience some of the romance that you had those many years ago. I dare you to try!

**Are you truly a SERVANT leader, where your example is the primary focus of your leadership, rather than lecturing and trying to change your wife (and children)?**

I believe we grossly underestimate this dynamic in our homes. We as Dads quite often wish we could invoke the rule, “Don’t do as I do; just do as I say.” Unfortunately, this will not work in the long term in our marriages, our homes, our churches, or our businesses. We like to see

an example before we commit to following a leader. I believe that if we need to err on one side or the other, if we cannot achieve a good balance of both, it would be best to err on the side of being a good example without the teaching, rather than teaching without being an example. A leader who refuses, or cannot, lead by example may at first appear to have good results by his harsh and strict command, but eventually the fruit will show its true self. Many times that comes too late in the game to switch to a different playbook; the game is already lost.

If we are truly servants as leaders, we will not be too proud to truly hear the heartbeat of our wife and our children, then make decisions that are for the long-term good, not the one that will bolster our reputation.

I recently heard this quote as it relates to having influence on others, “No one will be influenced by someone they don’t like.” I believe this is very true in our homes.

**Are your expectations for your children motivated by a desire to see them become godly, well-adjusted adults, or by your need to protect your reputation?**

Ouch! Do I need to say more? We are raising God’s children. We are openly stewards that have the opportunity to help weed and water the garden, then wait for God to provide the fruit.

Dads, this is NOT ABOUT YOU! It is really about raising up godly seed for the glory of God. 

# Conservative Anabaptists on Trial— Part Two

*David L. Miller, Partridge, KS*

A reader responded to Part 1 (October, page 6), expressing sincere appreciation for Part 1 (even though I had not called it Part 1). But the respondent made an earnest appeal that I would write a follow-up, touching another important aspect of congregational life.

I realize that Part 1 weighed heavily on negative content. To consider the burden of the first article is obviously not the whole picture. In an effort to address another important aspect of congregational life, let us choose a subtitle: “Ideal Relationships Between Leadership and the Body.”

This is to acknowledge that to be chosen of God to assist in pastoral leadership is a sacred calling. The seriousness of this calling is underscored in James 3:1, “Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly.” (NIV)

The term “ideal” in the subtitle is carefully chosen. It is only realistic to remember that an ideal is something we strive for, but never fully arrive at. But it is extremely important that the ideal

is always in view. The issue is two-sided. If there were such a thing as perfect leadership it would still be possible for members to respond wrongly. As it is, we are all human and by God’s grace we should be able to serve Him acceptably with reverence and godly fear.

The Pastoral Epistles are rather specific in pointing to qualifications for leadership. For those already involved in leadership, there are several directives that are general but inclusive and practical. The New Testament had many “take heeds” that apply to Christians generally, but there are three that apply specifically to leaders: “Take heed unto thyself” occurs in 2 Tim. 4:16 and Acts 20:28. Since the imperative appears twice maybe it is doubly important. To me it means God’s servant will want to have his relationship with the Lord current, stable and vibrant. He will want to be the kind of person who can respond with carefulness and sympathy to one who shares a personal problem.

God’s servant will remember that God’s Word of authority is also a message of comfort and grace.

Companion words “grace and truth” should both be evident in preaching. One without the other is a bit unbalanced. Message bearers should want to appeal to hearers and not talk down to them.

2 Tim. 4:16 also instructs the minister to take heed unto the doctrine. One can hardly over-emphasize the importance of sound teaching. Taking heed simply calls attention to being careful to prove all things by checking with God’s Word of inspiration and authority. Commentaries may be helpful, but diligent study of the Word makes them less needful. Extra-biblical materials should be used with caution, remembering that God’s Word is the final authority. Ministers who have access to the internet should remember that that source is not a good alternative to diligent study.

Sometimes grievous wolves from without or persons from within who speak perverse things to gain a following (Acts 20:29,30) must be withstood with firm courage. Taking heed unto sound doctrine is especially needful for pastoral leaders. But it is also needful for all believers.

Taking heed unto the flock is another important part of pastoral leadership. This means that we love the flock. We know them as

individuals and we take an interest in the children and young people. We seek to do so without transgressing the bounds of discretion and good judgment. We want to be worthy of their confidence. It seems to me that a team of leaders has a decided advantage over a single pastorate. There is usually some variety of gifting which is helpful in meeting various needs in the body.

I assume that we could all agree that sincere Christians want to be ministered to by brethren, who though human, are men of unquestioned integrity and who are willing to hear whatever concerns that members of the body need to bring. This includes an atmosphere of friendliness and openness to people who bring honest questions. It also includes the wisdom to make a right response to misguided intentions. Surely the One who loves the church and gave Himself for it would want this also.

I have written this in response to a specific request. This review is a reminder that during the years of active ministry, I have often fallen short of my own goals. But God is gracious. I still believe it is important to have high ideals. I now have the privilege for a brief time to see younger able men carry the responsibilities of pastoral leadership.



## marriages

*May the homes established by these marriages be little substations of heaven, where God reigns and His blessings flow.*

### **Chupp-Diller**

Bro. Michael Wayne, son of Mark and Freida Chupp, Eden Valley, MN, and Sis. Rosie Dawn (Rosie), daughter of Jay and Linda Diller, Greencastle, PA, on Oct. 10, 2015, at First Assembly of God Church for Mountain View Mennonite Church, by Keith Clugston.

### **Gingerich-Detweiler**

Bro. Japheth, son of Lester and Ruth Gingerich, Burkesville, KY, and Sis. Lori, daughter of Bob and Susan Detweiler, Auburn, KY, on Sept. 19, 2015, at Franklin Mennonite Church for Providence Fellowship by Leroy Kauffman.

### **Graber-Yoder**

Bro. Leon, son of Floyd and Esther Graber, Rose Hill, VA, and Sis. Lena, daughter of Menno and Roseanna Yoder, Rose Hill, VA, at Friendship Baptist Church, Jonesville, VA, for Maranatha Bible Fellowship, on Oct. 2, 2015, by Raymond Fisher.

### **Herschberger-Martin**

Bro. Lavon Jay, son of Willard and Edna Mae Herschberger, Arthur, IL, and Sis. Karisa Dawn, daughter of Brian and Angela Martin, Oldtown, MD, at Bethel Assembly of God for Oldtown Mennonite Church, on Sept. 19, 2015, by Ken Gehman.

### **Marner-Stutzman**

Bro. Mark, son of Albert and Sadie Marner, Leon, IA, and Sis. Kaylene, daughter of Floyd and Rose Stutzman, Leon, IA, in rural Leon for Salem Mennonite on Oct. 2, 2015, by Monroe Gingerich.

### **Miller-Nisly**

Bro. Ryan, son of Arlyn and Sharon Miller, LaGrange, IN, and Sis. Alanna, daughter of Ken and Gloria Nisly, Due West, SC, at Due West Baptist Church for Cold Spring Mennonite Church on June 6, 2015, by Wayne Nisly.

### **Miller-Yutzzy**

Bro. Reuben, son of Melvin Ray and Elizabeth Miller, Hutchinson, KS, and Sis. Sara, daughter of Marvin and Rhoda Yutzzy, Arlington, KS, at Maranatha Mennonite Church for Center A.M. Church, on Oct. 30, 2015, by David M. Yoder.

### **Nisly-Byler**

Bro. Justin, son of Wayne and Leona Nisly, Due West, SC, and Sis. Jalisa, daughter of Harvey and Wendi Byler, Dover, DE, at Chestertown Baptist Church for Central Mennonite Church on May 2, 2015, by Wayne Nisly.

### **Stoltzfus-Beiler**

Bro. S. Michael, son of Simon and Joyce Stoltzfus, Taylorsville, NC, and Sis. Anita Ruth, daughter of Melvin and Verna Beiler, Elmer, NJ, at Hardingville Bible Church for Salem County Mennonite Church, on Oct. 10, 2015, by Lee Stoltzfus.



## cradle roll

*The children which the Lord hath graciously given . . . Genesis 33:5*

**Beachy**, Arlen and Kayla (Wray), Amboy, IN, fourth child, second son, Micah Taylor, Sept. 11, 2015.

**Bender**, Javon and Melody (Petersheim), Abbeville, SC, third child, second son, Judson Lee, Aug. 15, 2015.

**Chupp**, Devon and Meghann (McGurrin), Topeka, IN, third child second daughter, Emmalyn Kate, Aug. 17, 2015.

**Eicher**, Brian and Liz (Stoll), Hicksville, OH, first child and daughter, Kaylie Elizabeth, Oct. 28, 2015.

**Fisher**, Gene and Charity (Stoll), Due West, SC, fourth child, third daughter, Brooklyn Rayne, June 16, 2015.

**Frey**, Sheldon and Amy (Schlabach), Middlebury, IN, second and third children and sons, twins, Theodore James and Wyatt David, Oct. 12, 2015.

**Gerber**, Michael and Debbie (Stoltzfus), Taylorsville, NC, third child, first son, Kaden Michael, Aug. 16, 2015.

**Hochstetler**, Keith and Elmina (Graber), Amboy, IN, eighth child (two in heaven),

fifth son, Jaylon Keith, Aug. 31, 2015.

**Hochstetler**, Lester and Lisa (Bontrager), Kokomo, IN, first child and son, Dwight Shaun, July 8, 2015.

**Jantzi**, Conrad and Christine (Schmidt), Wellesley, ON, third child, second daughter, Amber Leann, Oct. 15, 2015.

**Keim**, David and Martha (Stutzman), McArthur, OH, seventh child, fourth son, Matthew David, Aug. 16, 2015.

**King**, Ivan and Verna (Hostetler), Honey Brook, PA, fifth child, second son, Lamar Isaac, Sept. 15, 2015.

**Knepp**, Lewis and Kaylene (Miller), Lo0ogootee, IN, first child and daughter, Alyssa Joy, Oct. 15, 2015.

**Kurtz**, Mark and Marla (Stoltzfus), Belleville, PA, third child and son, Benjamin Enos, Sept. 30, 2015.

**Miller**, Jonathan and Ruth Yvonne (Yoder), Big Prairie, OH, fourth child, second son, Kendrick Benjamin, July 22, 2015.

**Stoltzfus**, Joe and Anita (King), Parkesburg, PA, first child and son, Justin Courage, Sept. 12, 2015.

**Swartzentruber**, Kevin and Retha (Slabaugh), Abbeville, SC, first child and son, Cameron Dale, May 7, 2015

**Troyer**, Mark and Nancy (Kurtz), Jackson, OH, fourth child, third son, Jaylon Eric, Aug. 5, 2015.

**Wagler**, Lavern and Ruth (Wengerd), Paris, TN, fourth child, third son, Landon Glen, Oct. 15, 2015.

**Weaver**, Adrian and Ruth (Yoder), Millersburg, OH, sixth child, second son, Ethan Joel, July 22, 2015.

**Yoder**, Richard and Valetta (Byler), Blackville, SC, first child and daughter, Keturah Ann, Oct. 13, 2015. 

## ordinations

*May the grace of God be upon our brothers  
as they minister faithfully. Let us pray for them.*

**Bro. Javon Bender**, 34, (wife: Melody Petersheim), Abbeville, SC, was ordained as deacon at Cold Spring Mennonite Church on April 19, 2015. Preordination messages were given by Raymond Fisher, Greenville, TN. The charge was given by Merl Beiler. Also sharing in the lot were Kevin Kauffman and Benji Jackson.

**Bro. David Keim**, 38, (wife: Martha Stutzman), was ordained as minister at Still Waters Mennonite Church of Jackson, Ohio, on Sept. 6, 2015. Preordination messages were given by Dale Heisey, Costa Rica. The charge was given by Paul Weaver, assisted by Dale Heisey. Sharing the lot was Andre Weaver.

**Bro. Andrew Martin**, 25, (wife: Arlene Raber), was ordained as minister at Hicksville Christian Fellowship, Hicksville, OH, on June 21, 2015. Preordination messages were given by

John Mast, Crossville, TN. The charge was given by Lavern Miller, assisted by Daniel Bontrager. Barry Hochstetler was also in the lot.

**Bro. Jason Miller**, 26, (wife: Carolyn Graber), Auburn, KY, was ordained as minister for Providence Mennonite Fellowship, Auburn, KY, on Oct. 4, 2015. Steve Miller brought preordination messages. Leroy Kauffman gave the charge, assisted by Jonathan Overholt and David Yoder, Jr. Marvin Shetler shared the lot with Jason. 



**Marnar**, Valentine J., (Felty), 61, of Arcola, Illinois, died April 12, 2015, at his home. He was born August 14, 1953, son of the late John G. and Katie (Beachy) Marnar.

Felty was a faithful member of Pleasant View Church in Arcola. He loved giving presentations of their trip to Israel and felt rewarded when ministers of other churches said it put new meaning into their sermons. He showed pictures and stories of their trip 33 times and had to turn down many invitations when his health was failing. The 2014 fall communion service was a very special, emotional experience for him. The spring 2015 communion service was scheduled for what was to be his graduation day. On that morning, his wife wondered if it might be the day he'd meet his Maker. She said, "Today our church is having communion and you could have communion with Jesus." Immediately, his eyes opened wide and he drew his last breath.

On August 16, 1975, Felty was married to Lydia Mae Mullet. She survives. Also surviving are five children: Juanita Josephine Marnar, Ranson, WV; Heather DeAnn (Drew) Miller, Sullivan; Heidi Denise Marnar, Sullivan; John Frederick Marnar, Harrison, AR; Joshua Val

Marnar, Arcola, four grandchildren; two brothers, Andrew (Lynn) Marnar, Arthur; and Daniel (Irene) Marnar, White Pigeon, MI; two sisters, Sarah Ann (Steven) Henry, Bement, IL; and Dorothy (Reuben) Hostetler, Chesterville.

He was preceded in death by one grandson, Cole Gabriel Miller.

The funeral was held at Pleasant View Church on April 15, with Howard Kuhns officiating. Burial was in the Pleasant View Cemetery.

**McClung**, Gary Lloyd, III, 23, of Western Grove, Arkansas, died in a swimming accident July 12, 2015. He was born Oct. 4, 1991, son of Gary and Clora McClung in West, Texas.

Gary was a member of Little Flock Christian Fellowship.

On Feb. 28, 2011, he was married to Alexandria Heft. They welcomed daughter Brooklyn Scarlett on Oct. 8, 2014. Gary loved his little family and being a dad. He affectionately named his daughter "Mee-Doo." Gary was passionate about music and often played a bedtime lullaby for Brooklyn on his mandolin.

He was also an avid outdoorsman as well as fixing up guns to trade. He enjoyed carpentry and woodworking. He thrived on emergency work and was a first responder and volunteer with the Western Grove fire department.

On their way out to enjoy the Buffalo National River, the family

paused at the location of Judson Stoltzfus's death. Praying together, and commenting on how much they missed Judson, they couldn't imagine how hard this past year was for the Tim Stoltzfus family.

At the river, Alexandria watched Gary jump off a bluff into the water. Apparently, something happened at this point. As Alexandria walked along the river, she did not hear Gary swimming. Then she saw him floating in the water. Bringing him to shore, she attempted CPR on him. She called for help from some passing kayakers, who also did CPR and made phone calls for her.

Quite a few of the first responders, fire fighters, and emergency personnel were acquaintances of Gary. The family appreciates their efforts and compassion. They believe Gary's death was instant.

Survivors include his wife and daughter, Alexandria and Brooklyn; his parents, Gary and Clora; siblings: Bryn, Joshua, Elisha, Timothy, Zane, Caleb, Abigail, Anna, Elizabeth, Ada, Josiah, Sara, and Clora. He is also greatly missed by his in-laws: Daniel and Lena Heft; Shae (Nicholas) Hamilton; Matthew, Bartholomew, Caleb, and Gabriel Heft; and "Mee-Mee" Sandra Scarlett.

The funeral was held on July 14, with Mark Auker, Tim Stoltzfus, and Charles Hamilton serving. Burial was in the Little Flock Cemetery.

**Miller, Edith I.**, 53, of McConnellsville, OH, died Oct. 2, 2015. She was born Nov. 4, 1961, daughter of the late Elmer and Lena (Yoder) Beachy.

She was a member of Ebenezer Mennonite Church.

On Aug. 6, 1988, she was married to Thomas Miller. He survives. Also surviving are a daughter, Shavonn Miller, McConnellsville; sons, Christopher, Darryl, Weston, Conrad, and Jonathan Miller, all of McConnellsville; five sisters, Esther Hershberger, Wooster, OH; Rhoda Curtis, Grantsville, MD; Orpha Petersheim, Oakland, MD; Brenda Yoder, Grantsville, MD; Kathy Beachy, Grantsville, MD; and a brother, Jason Beachy, Dayton, VA.

The funeral was held on Oct. 5, with Bishop Laverne Yoder officiating. Burial was in the Ebenezer Mennonite Cemetery.

**Miller, Esther E.**, 80, of McConnellsville, OH, died Sept. 9, 2015, at Genesis Hospice, Morrison House, in Zanesville. She was born April 1, 1935, daughter of the late Emanuel and Ada (Miller) Troyer.

Esther was a homemaker and a member of Ebenezer Mennonite Church, McConnellsville.

On March 21, 191957, she was married to Melvin J. Miller. He survives. Other survivors include four sons, James (Rose) Miller,

Minerva, OH; Timothy Miller, Thomas (Edith) Miller, and Marcus Miller, all of McConnellsville; a sister, Mattie Lowry, Hagerstown, MD; two brothers, Aden Troyer, Walnut Creek, OH; and Aaron Troyer, Rutherford, TN; 12 grandchildren and nine great grandchildren.

She was preceded in death by a son, Gerald Miller.

The funeral was held on Sept. 13, with Bishop Laverne Yoder officiating. Burial was in the Ebenezer Mennonite Cemetery

**Troyer**, Alma, 83, of Sugarcreek, OH, died on Sept. 26, 2015, at Walnut Hills Nursing Home after a period of declining health. She was born Nov. 7, 1931, daughter of the late Melvin and Elmina (Beachy) Yoder.

She was a member of Maranatha Fellowship Church. She was a homemaker, a former cook at Dutch Valley Restaurant, and she also did taxi service.

On Dec. 12, 1962, she was married to Melvin L. Troyer. He died on Dec. 15, 2008. She is survived by five sons: Merle (Jan) Troyer, Sarasota, FL; Edwin (Frances) Troyer, Millersburg, OH; John (Ruth) Troyer, Mark (Freda) Troyer, Martin (Millie) Troyer, all of Sugarcreek, OH; three daughters: Nettie (Collier) Berkshire, Nappanee, IN; Elmina (Steve) Miller, Millersburg, OH; and Bethany Troyer, Sugarcreek,

OH; 24 grandchildren, 12 great grandchildren, and two sisters, Gladys (Perry) Detweiler, and Malinda (Ervin) Beachy, both Sugarcreek, OH.

Others preceding her in death were three brothers, Ezra, Menno, and Noah Yoder; a son, James Troyer, a daughter-in-law, Debbie Troyer, and a great granddaughter, Lindsey Berkshire.

The funeral was held on Sept. 29, with Paul Leroy Miller officiating. Burial was in the church cemetery.

**Zook**, Paul, 58, of Abbeville, SC, died at Emory St. Joseph Hospital in Atlanta, GA, on July 28, 2015. He was born in Gap, PA, on May 16, 1957, son of the late Amos L. and Linda N. (Yoder) Zook.

He was a member of Cold Spring Mennonite Church, Abbeville.

On June 16, 1979, he was married to Miriam Miller. She survives. Their children are Ethan (fiancee Melissa) and Andrew (Yvonne) Zook.

Preceding him in death were a stillborn daughter, Abigail Elizabeth Zook, a sister, Julia Ann Beiler, a brother, Samuel and two brothers-in-law, David Glick and Emmanuel Yoder.

The funeral was held at Cold Spring Mennonite Church on August 1, with Wayne Nisly and Merl Beiler serving. Burial was in the Cold Spring cemetery, Rod Musser officiating. 

Student debt used to be considered good debt. Payoff could happen over an extended period of time with low interest and a college education was seen by many as guaranteeing a middle-class income at a minimum. However, the rising cost of college education coupled with stagnant wages, and a sluggish economy, make student debt more problematic all the time. Many households are still paying off student debt at the same time they are trying to pay for and send their own children off to college which amounts to a cycle of ongoing, multi-generational student debt. The college graduate under age 40 is still paying just over \$400 a month to retire his/her student debt. The college educated graduate now spends more money retiring student debt than for groceries. For many it amounts to a second mortgage payment, except that this debt has no collateral.

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Several months ago, I made comment in this column about weddings. That is part of the reason that an article by Dan Cox of Public Religion Research Institute caught my attention. He addressed the trend of today's American weddings moving from religious settings like a chapel or a church to religious-neutral settings like a rustic barn, outdoors,

an art gallery, a winery, or the local courthouse.

He cites several reasons for this shift:

- In 2014, the cost of a wedding averaged about \$30,000! While saving money is one motive, it should be noted that not all weddings at venues other than churches are less expensive.

- The increased incidence of marriages between persons of different religious affiliation. For instance, a Catholic and a Mormon who wed might opt for a neutral location so as not to offend their family and friends.

- The growing number of persons who wed who are religiously unaffiliated. Those who have no church home are less likely to arrange for a church venue and religious officiant.

He references an additional factor that steers religious weddings to non-traditional locations that moved me from an interested, but detached reader, to a more introspective posture. He commented, "Given that weddings today more often reflect the personal preferences and values of the couple than the prefabricated expectations of a traditional community, the decline in the use of religious venues and officiants is fairly telling."

•••••

At a child's birthday party a mother's disagreement erupted

toward the behavior of one of the children. The disagreements became quite animated, featuring colorful language, bared fists, and hair-pulling by the moms involved, before the law intervened to quiet the storm.

An umpire was accosted after a children's softball game by an irate parent who felt that his son was the victim of an inaccurate call during the game. The out-of-control dad was charged with battery and disorderly conduct. We shake our heads in amazement when adults betray their immaturity by acting like spoiled children.

Some people respond very negatively to perceived injustice. The importance of allowing God to keep score for us regarding whether we've been treated fairly or not, is something that parents should give careful attention to when preparing their children for life.

A related, but slightly different

problem is the phenomenon of a person's rational thought processes being short-circuited whenever a problem involves a family member or relative. Sad to say, most of us can probably think of one or more cases where this has happened in our midst. Wherever present, these thorny disruptions constitute a huge relational energy drain. The effects may be felt in our schools, churches, voluntary service units, between in-laws and almost anywhere that human relationships exist.

I'm not sure if people who act this way are aware of their own handicap or not. Whenever we become aware that we have displayed this trait, repentance is really the only proper response. A healthy openness to and appreciation for the value of brotherhood perspective also provides a helpful measure of inoculation against this scourge.

-RJM



## mission awareness

# An Encouragement to Sing Christmas Carols

*Floyd Stoltzfus, Belize City, Belize*

In December, many places throughout the world and thousands of times, Christmas carols are sung to the praise and glory of God. Gabriel told Mary, "And,

**behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God**

**shall give unto him the throne of his father David”** (Luke 1:31, 32).

The night came when the first part of this prophetic announcement was literally fulfilled in the little town of Bethlehem. The virgin birth of Christ is one of the cardinal doctrines of the Christian faith. It is an event worth singing about because the plan of God was accomplished in that the sinless, second Person of the Triune God became human.

Thomas Nelson states it well, “The miraculous birth of Christ is verified by the statement that Mary was a virgin when she gave birth to the Son of God.” Matthew 1:23 and 25 reports the incident this way, “Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us... And knew her not (*Joseph kept her a virgin: footnote*) till she had brought forth her first-born son and he called his Name JESUS.”

Ancient hymn writers were deeply gripped by the biblical teaching of the incarnation of Christ. Caelius Sedulius (c. 450) expressed this truth in poetic form:

From east to west, from shore to shore,  
Let every heart awake and sing:

The Saviour whom a virgin bore,  
The Christ, the everlasting King.

Behold, the world’s creator wears  
the form and fashion of a slave;

Our very flesh our Maker shares,  
His fallen creature, man, to save.

For this how wondrously He wrought!  
A virgin in her lowly place,  
Became in ways beyond all thought,  
the Chosen vessel of His grace.

(This piece of inspiration and more was put to music by John Hatton in 1793.)

In my youth in Pennsylvania, we as a group would divide into smaller groups and sing Christmas carols for shut-ins and elderly people in their homes. Then, later in the same evening, we would climb into an open semi-trailer and go singing for various people long into the night. This was a home mission extension of the church. We looked forward to it with joy, even though it was tiring.

We needed to really bundle up. Here in Belize, it seems strange to us to sing Christmas carols walking around without coats, enjoying the tropical air. Wherever we roam, let us continue to herald forth the great hymns and spiritual songs of the incarnation!

Singing Christmas carols and other spiritual songs may keep some person from committing suicide. A married couple, just maybe, who is contemplating divorce, but an old-fashioned Christmas carol awakens their memories, brings conviction to their hearts and they seek the Lord in repentance and restoration.

Beautiful, four-part Gospel singing has a way of lifting weary burdens from the heart. Psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs give expression to our loftiest aspirations, unite us in worship, and lift our hearts toward God. Here are some good tips for singing given by John Wesley in 1761:

### **Seven Rules for Singing\***

Learn the tunes of the songs well.

Sing them exactly as they are printed here, without altering them at all.

Join with the group as frequently as you can. Let not a slight degree of weariness hinder you. If singing is a cross for you, take it up, and you will find it a blessing.

Sing lustily and with good courage. Beware of singing as if you were half

dead or half asleep, but lift up your voice with strength.

Sing modestly. Do not bawl, so as to be heard above or distinct from the rest of the group, that you may not destroy the harmony.

Sing with correct timing. Do not run before nor stay behind it, but attend close to the leading voices and move therewith as exactly as you can.

Above all, sing spiritually. Have an eye on God in every word you sing. Aim at pleasing Him more than yourself or any other person. Attend strictly to the sense of what you sing, and see that your heart is not carried away with the sound, but offer your voice to God continually.

(\*Slightly altered and abridged.  
-FS)



## helpers at home

# Christmas Sharing

*Mary June Glick, Seneca, SC*

December brings with it the anticipation of another Christmas celebration. Our thoughts often gravitate toward family gift giving, Christmas programs, caroling, and many other activities which have become a part of our Christmas celebrations.

Hopefully, we focus on the biblical

story of Christmas and the reason for Christ's birth. I enjoy looking at the main characters in the cast of this biblical account and the predominant message each one displays. Mary, the mother of Jesus definitely portrays a woman of submission. Joseph, her husband-to-be portrays obedience. Elizabeth

illustrates a woman of deep friendship and unselfishness as she blesses Mary and the baby in Mary's womb. The angels give a message of peace and good will. The shepherds demonstrate great joy as they worship the baby Jesus. The wise men indicate an attitude of selfless giving of their time and riches as they search for the King and honor Him with gifts.

In this article I want to focus on the Wise Men and their selfless giving or sharing as this title suggests. The Wise Men brought their best gifts: gold, frankincense, and myrrh. These were costly gifts for a king: Gold represents royalty. Frankincense is used in worship. Myrrh is used to embalm a body, showing the significance that this baby King was born to die. I believe these men brought their BEST to honor the new King. We know they traveled a long distance and searched until they found Him. Along with their gifts, they also gave their TIME.

Recently while visiting together with friends, I asked for suggestions for this Christmas article. One woman immediately mentioned, "Teaching children to share" (rather than being absorbed in what they will receive). We want to teach our children values, and sharing is a significant value which we begin to teach when our children are only toddlers. Sharing along with other

values is best taught by example.

Children emulate what they observe in their parents. Teach your children to be a blessing to others this Christmas by sharing. Share with compassion and generosity. Acquaint your children with the needs in your community, in the world and even in the church. Read newsletters from missionaries, talk about children who are hungry, suffering from war, refugee camps, and otherwise homeless. Be compassionate when you see someone in your own community or city who is living in poverty. Teach kindness to the elderly in your neighborhood or congregation. As children observe your compassion and kindness to hurting people they will develop sensitivity and concern in their own hearts.

Now we want to look at some practical ways of sharing this Christmastime:

**Many elderly people are living alone.** Share a plate of baked goods—a small pie or loaf of bread is often a treat. Give them something to decorate and brighten their home. I discovered that there are people who receive no Christmas cards. The children could help you make a centerpiece for their table. A plate of Christmas dinner or invitation to a meal in your home could bless a lonely person. Perhaps you could invite several families or lonely

people for an evening of fellowship and food. They would love to hear the children sing carols.

**Share a gift.** Take the children shopping to buy gifts for someone who may not receive a gift. Samaritan's Purse is an excellent opportunity to pack a shoebox with toys and clothes for children all over the world. CAM sends out a catalog where you can choose a gift for a specific need. It is important to involve your children in sending money; perhaps they can earn money for a project or you can decide to do without something and give instead. Give gifts that are durable and of good quality. If your gift is not good enough for you, it is

not good enough to give to others. Be creative in giving.

**Visit a nursing home.** Nursing homes and hospitals can be sad places over the holidays. Children can make cards or even scrapbooks for the elderly. You can spread cheer by singing for these lonely people. Many people just long to talk to someone. Encourage the children to ask them about times long ago.

Share out of your heart. Share with love and compassion. Focus on serving others, thereby giving your family the opportunity to experience the true meaning of Christmas. May God bless your family with the gift of sharing this Christmas. 

## junior messages

# Joy For Widows' Hearts

*Mary Ellen Beachy, Kisumu, Kenya*

*This Christmas if you want to give gifts, try giving to those who cannot give back in return. Give because you love Jesus. Give because you truly are very blessed. Give to the poor and you too will have joy in your heart.*

In the back of the large mission van were stacked 30 neat cardboard boxes of food and other practical gifts, ready to be given to poverty-stricken widows. Marcellus was driving. Tom was

going along to show us the way. Micah and I decided to join this errand of mercy for the poor.

The first stop was a mud hut that spoke of poverty and neglected hygiene. An old granny was sitting

up in bed, amazed at getting visitors. I had to wonder if she thought the gods had come down among them. Some Africans actually esteem a white person in that way.

This lady could not walk. She was obviously pleased with the box of food and eight dollars cash that was handed to her. We sang a song that it seems all Luos know, “Wan Manno Waylo.” (We are just visitors in this world down here on our way to heaven.)

At the next place 10 widows were waiting at one house. When they were asked if they have any source of income, most of them said they still do some gardening. They plant food for the table. Gardening is very important for survival in East Africa.

I think all of them had two or more grandchildren living with them. I do not really understand how they survive and I believe there is a hunger problem at times. These 10 widows were all obviously delighted and grateful.

The next widow was amazed with the gift. She fell on her knees by the box on the hard earth in front of her door and burst into a prayer of thanks to God that went on and on for quite a while. It was neat, really, she was so grateful and unashamed to pray in the presence of others. When we drove away, I looked back and she was down on her knees

again, thanking the Lord. God had not forgotten her and her heart overflowed with gratitude.

In another place, there were 11 widows and a crippled man waiting in a tin-roofed church with mud walls. They were singing. They too were grateful to be remembered with a gift of food.

At another place where we drove in, a portly, old woman in a large, flowing green robe and green head scarf came around the corner of her house. She was using an African stool for a walker. Inside were five more widows waiting.

There are so many widows in East Africa! Polygamy is still common in this land. When a polygamist dies, there are often numerous widows. These widows are considered the property of the dead husband, so they seldom marry again.

In the area we were today, parcels are just randomly given to the needy. I don't know if they will get more than one. These widows are so poor and we have so much—and I am not always grateful.

*Lord, help to be more grateful for things I so easily take for granted—food, clothing, but best of all, thanks for sending your Son, Jesus. Thank You that salvation is a free gift. The best gift, and it is for the rich, the poor, and all mankind. Thank You, Jesus, for the joy You bring to my heart. Thank You, Jesus!*



## *The Elephant Called Sports*

*-Gideon Yutzy, Hutchinson, KS*

**D**o you have access to a bomb shelter? I need to defuse some explosives but I lack bomb squad training.

I wish to say a few things about sports.

It came about like this. Several weeks ago I was feeling discouraged because of this column. Though intended for young people, it is seldom read by young people, or at least that's how it has felt based on the amount of feedback I've gotten from them.

Disheartened, I thought of resigning. Then it occurred to me that, before I left the metaphorical room, I should do this one thing—expose an elephant in that room and sound the trumpet (metaphorically, of course).

So I looked out across the menagerie that is the twenty-first century Beachy Amish church and there I spotted an elephant. On its back was written but one word: SPORTS.

To further ensure that this was indeed an elephant and not just some oversized horse, I decided to do a survey and gather some data on the subject. That survey has come back positive—elephant. Our young people, the survey revealed, spend

an average of four hours per week with sports.

Most of those four hours, if it's any consolation to the grandparents, are spent participating in sports, not following them. In fact, the majority of the young people freely admitted that little good comes out of spectator sports. When it comes to playing sports though, the benefits listed were myriad and varied. When you actually play them, sports “develop good teamwork”, “make it easier for men to strike up a casual conversation with a lady”, and “provide a way for us to exercise physically.”

“Sports are,” in the words of a high school junior who completed my survey, “a wonderful break from the rest of life.” Ah, I knew that one would come up. Escape. Sports, especially spectator sports, are an escape.

Kudos to this young man for his honesty and his concise summary of the real reason that we—at least a good few of us—feel drawn to sports. But his point is also one of my gravest fears about the sports issue.

Why do I think escaping through sports is dangerous? I'll tell you why. Turn to something—anything—as an escape from life's stress and it will

become your Highest Good. You will come to find all aspects of religion in It; times of deepest human interaction will be with other believers in It. Ultimate inner meaning will come from It.

That's why this is serious. But beyond that, when our involvement in sports is mostly vicarious, we have taken disengagement from real life to a dangerous extreme—from a religious standpoint as well as many other standpoints. There is something destructive in sports, to quote a sage friend of mine, if it is solely disembodied. Where is the hand-eye coordination? Where are the social skills referenced so frequently by those who completed my survey?

This doesn't mean that participant sports are always profitable and spectator sports are never profitable. For instance, the athleticism found in spectator sports can be an art form and it is acceptable and even natural to be amazed at the feats highly-disciplined, talented athletes perform.

Of course their remarkable skill is only a marginal part of God's creation. Their games are cosmically inconsequential, and only a fool would spend long hours following them. Thousands of other wonders, all of which are far more spectacular than puny athletes, await our adoration and devotion. Yet an argument could be made that involvement in spectator sports has value—minimal value, yes, but value all the same.

And arguments could also be made

that participating in sports poses its own set of downsides.

No one can deny the temptation, for instance, to showboat and stroke one's ego while playing sports. No one can deny that sports rob time. No one can deny that sports can cause feelings of exclusion.

What's an unathletic young person to do when the sole activity at social functions is volleyball played at a high skill level? What if volleyball wasn't, in her subculture growing up, the predominant source of authentic social interaction? (This is not, by the way, a purely hypothetical scenario.)

Elmo Stoll, the late founder of the Cookeville communities, did not approve of mixed gender sports. In today's Beachy Amish culture, his position would be met with raised eyebrows and outright scorn. If anything is deeply instilled in our subculture, it is that young people play volleyball when they attend Calvary Bible School or other events. (Regarding this, I have only one burning question: has any youth group out there given origami a fair go?)

The point is, putting aside our presuppositions is crucial to understanding an issue of this complexity. We must look at the issue through a different lens, find a new point of reference, and step outside our own skin. The metaphor we choose is not as important as actually doing it.

*Achtung*, blared the humorless microphones in German-occupied

Europe. *Achtung*: we in the twenty-first century are not using our time wisely. Does this mean only sports addicts squander their time? No. Sometimes industrious businessmen squander their time. Sometimes church workers squander their time. Sometimes people from every station in life squander their time.

Squandering time, in its simplest definition, means valuing the wrong things and devaluing the right things. It's like the pranksters in the Tony Campolo story who went into a general store and arbitrarily switched price tags on the merchandise. The price tag that had been on the vacuum cleaner ended up on the Coca-Cola bottle.

What has become our five-hundred dollar Coke, and what sacred thing have we stripped of its value? This is the crux of the elephantine sports issue.

If we can answer that question honestly, the aforementioned

discussion points will become most irrelevant. Want proof? Just ask around a bit. Ask the lady who left her cushy life as homecoming queen in Tennessee to run an orphanage in Uganda. Ask the single young schoolteacher who, for a minimum wage, pours sixty hours a week into coaching junior high students through the perils of adolescence.

How many hours per week should I allot to sports? Should my involvement in sports be limited to participation or may I, in some cases, follow professional sports?

We've heard it so often we've become hardened to it. Yet it is one of the best lines from the finest sermon ever preached: Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things—the need to escape, the need to hone social skills, the need to get physical exercise, and every other conceivable need—will be added to you.



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*Abbreviations used: ed = editorial; HH = helpers at home;*

*JM = junior messages; SM = school matters; M = meditation;*

*MA = mission awareness; MMM = Musings about Martyrs' Mirror;*

*obs = observations; P = poem; RR = reader response; Y = youth.*

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Periodicals

# THOUGHT GEMS

A hearty laugh is some of the best medicine available whether we are sick or well.



History is to a church what memory is to an individual.



Few men are as accomplished as it sounds at their retirement party.



Some of us are so careful not to make mistakes that we make very little at all.



One of the most sensitive nerves in our bodies is the one that goes to our wallets.



Why do songs that make the least sense make the most money?



Putting one's name on hearts is better than putting it on stone.



Living a good life is not like playing tennis; we don't need to raise a racket.



You know you're tired when you sit in a rocking chair and you can't get it going.



Adolescence: A time in life when teenagers think they will never be as out-of-date as their parents are.



Too many a man has turned and left the dock just before his ship came in.



True patience means waiting without worrying.



Many people look back; some look forward, and too many look confused.



Often "genius" is simply another way of spelling "perseverance."



A pessimist burns his bridges before he gets to them.