



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

Galatians 6:14

JANUARY 2016

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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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Angels in my Pathways

Wendell Schlabach, Clarkrange, TN

“For the Lord’s portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance. He found them in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness; he led him about, he instructed him, and kept him as the apple of his eye” (Deut. 32:9, 10).

My Lord, there’s stretching distantly before me
A path that You have set before my feet
No, *pathways*, Lord
And You have left the choosing up to me.

Why in your might have You entrusted freely
To us, a feeble folk that You have made,
The awful load
To choose our path among such sin, for good?

I feel as if I’m riding Balaam’s donkey
And stubbornly refuse to turn aside
Until I see an angel in my pathway
Who stands to choose, *for me*, the right!

What is a man that You are mindful of him
What draws You, Lord, to guide his falt’ring way?
Yet send, I pray those angels, Lord,
Lest I would go astray.

Oh God!
You guide,
I’ll step inside
those loving footprints you have made,
that ever lead me after You, on to a brighter day.



The Law: Holy, Just, and Good

(Romans 7:12)

Paul Brubaker tells about an incident during the Great Depression when some Works Progress Administration (WPA) workers were ordered to dig a long trench by hand. They were well under way when an inspector came to the site and told them they must stop. Then he told them to fill up the trench and dig the ditch about a hundred feet off to the side.

The men balked. One of them spoke up and said, “You know, we may be poor, but we do have our pride; we don’t want to just dig trenches and then turn around and fill them in.” The inspector explained, “Sir, there’s a gas line here and the records of exactly where it is are missing. We know it has a leak. Over there you can see apartment buildings. If we don’t find that leak the gas will collect, and when it hits a flame it will explode and lots of people will die!”

The men needed no further explanation. Gratefully grabbing

their tools, they proceeded to fill in what they had done, then dug into soil at the site indicated. Life brings us situations like that! Sometimes we need to do what makes little or no sense at first.

The Ten Commandments

Children grow up best when they learn to do willingly what they don’t fully understand. If their parents and teachers are considerate and loving, the children feel treasured. They are willing to do things beyond their understanding—including some things they’d rather not do. Such nurture prepares them to better follow God’s directives later on in life.

Nearly every deviation of compliance with God’s unchanging law for a good life starts with some kind of short-sighted, self-serving reasoning. Some decades ago, a woman told Martha, my wife, “God wants me to be happy, and I’m not happy with my husband. I will do what makes me happy.” So she got

a divorce and found someone else who was looking for happiness in forbidden places. Such reasoning stands in opposition to God's law contained in ten succinct and powerful commands, which God gave to Moses on Mt. Sinai. As we get older, we see more clearly that when the Ten Commandments are violated, people cannot expect the benefits of a life well-lived. Because God has designed life to be abundant and not filled with regret, He gave the Decalogue.

I recommend a recent (2013) book by Harold S. Martin, entitled, *A Study of the Ten Commandments*. It is published by Brethren Revival Fellowship. It may be ordered from, Bible Helps, PO Box 391, Hanover, PA, 17331. Here are three powerful quotes from the introduction: "The Ten Commandments are the essence of God's moral law." "It is true that the *ceremonial* and *civil* laws have been annulled." "Each of the Ten Commandments are repeated and expanded in the New Testament."

Ten chapter headings whet our appetites for how God provides for our well-being in His Law, which is, after all, God's "school master to bring us to Christ" (Gal. 3:24,25). Here are Martin's chapter headings:

- No Substitutes for God
- No False Images

- Be Careful with God's Name
- Don't Forget the Day of Rest
- Family life is Sacred
- Human Life is Sacred
- Marriage and Sex are Sacred
- The Prohibition against Stealing
- The Importance of Truth Telling
- The Cancer of Discontent

This hard-backed book of only 123 pages is power-packed. You won't find much repetition. You will, however, find life-related examples. After all, brevity is the soul of wit, and *showing* is often better than *telling*.

The Sabbath

Martin's treatment of the other nine commandments is most worthwhile, but I am here focusing on Bro. Martin's treatment of the fourth commandment. It's easy enough to see what's wrong with murder, adultery, and stealing. They are expressly forbidden in the New Testament. But because NT teaching on Sabbath observance is less direct, we could ask, "Is the Sabbath still important?"

Bro. Martin acknowledges that in Jesus' time false observance of the Sabbath had become burdensome. Jesus gave solemn warnings against extreme interpretations. (Note Matthew 23) Martin says the Pharisees of Jesus' day had listed 1521 ways by which one could break the Sabbath. This was certainly excessive,

but total cancellation is not a good recourse. Martin observes that, “Our observance of the Sabbath is to be governed by the principle of grace.” (p.47)

I’m not addressing the need for animal care. Nor do I speak here of acts of mercy for people in need of emergency and other health care. In our day we see businesses changing the policy of “No Sunday Business,” to “Open Every Day,” which may be a step forward, materially speaking, but is a step backward, spiritually speaking. Martin writes, “The fourth commandment is just as binding today as it ever was in the mind of God.” 44) “The Sabbath is intended for relaxing the body, for refreshing the mind, and for restoring the soul.” (pp. 44,45)

Anonymous poetic verse offers this,

“A Lord’s Day well spent, brings a week of content,

And strength for the toil of the morrow.

But a Sabbath profaned, whatever the gain,

Is surely a forerunner of sorrow.” (p. 49)

We understand the early church chose to hallow the first day of the week, the day that Jesus rose from the dead, as an appropriate upgrade from hallowing the original Sabbath. They chose the day Jesus rose from the dead, calling this one day in seven the Lord’s Day. We may do that, too!

So, while we realize that violating the fourth commandment may not have such obvious, negative consequences as does violating most of the other nine, sabbath neglect is contrary to God’s plan for His people. He would have us spend one day in seven different from the other six. Why? Because He designed the sabbath for us! Jesus said, “**The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath; therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath**” (Mark 2:27, 28).

-PLM 

LOVE

***Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with
all thy heart, and with all thy soul,
and with all thy mind.***

Matthew 22:37

Announcement

CASP 2016—Hutchinson, KS

The 2016 CASP projects planned for Hutchinson have the need for volunteers filled for the January term. As of December 1, however, we still need volunteers for the second and third terms (February and March). If you are available to respond to this need, contact Dathan Stoltzfus, 585-237-3519 or 585-259-2098).

This work involves repair carpentry in cooperation with Interfaith Housing. It is making a real difference in the housing situation in Hutchinson. Cooperation with Paul Yoder (Hands of Christ, Center Church's ministry to those in need) also helps make connections for people in need.

May God bless you as you consider this service opportunity! 

reader response

Re: Tipping the Scales, (Nov., Page 5)

Perhaps it is helpful to consider the illustration given by George R. Brunk in considering salvation and the Christian life. He gives three components as comprising the full Gospel.

- Faith (as in “Tipping the Scales”) (Acts 15:9-11)
- Regeneration (Gal. 6:15)
- Commandments (1 Cor. 7:19,

John 15:10-14)

Committing to only one of the above is like concentrating on only one-third of the full Gospel.

Protestants tend to concentrate on the “finished work on the cross”—believe this and you are saved.

Anabaptists including Mennonites believe we are saved when we repent and place our faith in Jesus. However, regenerated Christians are justified only if we continue in complete

obedience and commitment to Jesus and faithfully follow Bible teaching. When we no longer have our life committed to following Jesus, we are no longer justified.

How fulfilling it is to be fully committed to following Jesus our Lord and Savior!

James D. Hershberger
Stuarts Draft, VA



I Ponder

Chester Weaver, LaGrange, IN

I well remember the 1960's. The Beatles came here from England shaking their mop heads, causing girls to shriek and swoon, and shocking the entire nation with their new morality. President Kennedy died from an assassin's bullet in Dallas, Texas. The Vietnam War intensified in a far-away place and protest of the war intensified here at home. The hippies did their thing with drugs, free love, bell-bottom pants, long, straggly hair, and flower-painted VW buses. Rebellion and anti-establishment attitudes were everywhere, it seemed.

Even in Mennonite churches, it happened. As a teenager I watched as plain-suited men laid their straight cuts aside to adopt a conventional suit and tie. Women kept shrinking the size of their coverings and began to cut their hair. Mini-skirts were the rage "out there," but for some reason they became a problem "in here." Mennonites began to need television sets. And Mennonites began to need to accept divorced-and-remarried

people into church membership. The cry of the day was "relevancy." To be relevant, church conferences rewrote their position statements in order to gradually accommodate the new order of the day. Progress was in the air!

But not all church leaders saw matters that way. A number of far-seeing leaders interpreted the changes as apostasy and lent their voices in warning. The warnings were firmly resisted because the Conference Mennonite leadership across North America was marching to a new and different drummer. The book, *God and Uncle Dale*, illustrates how the stories often worked themselves out on a local level. The secular news media, CBS News, did a documentary on the changing Mennonites, entitling it, *Mennonites and the Peaceful Revolution*.

Some courageous Mennonite church leaders were conscience-driven to provide some kind of alternative. Thus Rod and Staff

Publishers was born. The Roxbury Fellowship Meetings, held at Roxbury, PA, provided a rallying point for conservatives across the continent. Pertinent messages and the mass of dedicated Mennonite North Americans who converged on that spot motivated renewed faithfulness to Christ and an effort to reclaim lost ground. The result was a ground swell of increased faithfulness to Christ and His church. Much of that faithfulness burned in the hearts of young families.

Fast-forward to 2015. Once again, 45 years later, one hears the old cry for relevancy. Traditional understanding should be replaced with “progress,” this time with direct attacks on Mennonite weaknesses and forceful calls to deconstruction.

And once again, some conservative Mennonite church leaders are leading the way to replace an Anabaptist theology with Evangelical theology. Ironically, while the leaders are making the “necessary changes,” many erstwhile members are departing for other pastures anyway. One wonders if these leaders know what happened among the Conference Mennonites in the 1960’s and if they care about the obvious repeat.

After 50 years, where is the greater Mennonite body, known in recent times as MC-USA? By their own admission they are almost totally assimilated into the general American culture, save for a few hold-out

issues such as peace and justice. In 2011, Herald Press published *From Nonresistance to Justice* by Ervin R. Stutzman. This book documents and chronicles the changes as the subtitle promises, *The Transformation of Mennonite Peace Rhetoric, 1908-2008*. This book is a must-read for any serious student of recent Mennonite history.

The most-esteemed Mennonite theologian, John Howard Yoder, who provided legitimacy to the Mennonite voice in academia, has now been disgraced by sexual misconduct, which had been covered up for years.

On an organizational and practical level, MC-USA is struggling to remain alive. The homosexuality/gay marriage issue is tearing the denomination apart in spite of MC-USA having one of the very highest levels of higher education per capita of any Christian denomination in North America. Institutional funding is creating crises as congregation after congregation is leaving MC-USA for various reasons. Biologically, MC-USA is failing to replace itself while its membership is aging. A dark future looms, except for the Global South where non-ethnic membership is increasing. Specific statistics can be read in *Road Signs for the Journey*, published by Herald Press in 2007, now several years out of date.

But, once again a ground-swell of

renewal is in the air. Both eastern and western sessions of CMTI (Conservative Mennonite Teachers Institute) hosted well over 800 people at each of its September sessions. Numbers of 575 at a single session in the late 1990's prompted planners to divide the single session into two. Now each of the separate sessions host numbers far beyond the reason for holding separate sessions. Faith Builders Teachers' Week is filled to capacity, even needing to refuse interested attenders because of facility limitations. These are certainly good problems to have.

Why do these good problems exist? Once again, a group of people are experiencing a renewed dedication to Christ and His Word. Once again, far-seeing leadership is rising to the occasion to provide adequate leadership for the renewal.

No one strategized or even planned what is happening today. **Christ is**

obviously at work in 2015!

What can be done to facilitate even more faithfulness? Every member must deal decisively with his/her personal idolatry tendency. Christ will assist each member with that as fast as He is allowed to proceed. Secondly, those intensely loyal to Christ should encourage congregational leaders to rise to every occasion with resistance to worldly and fleshly compromise. Christian school efforts must receive the best attention because the future lies with our children and what God will do through them. The increasingly dark North American spiritual environment should naturally cause faithful hearts to turn to each other for common resistance to the encroaching darkness. Who knows what bright lights and savory salt will accomplish at local levels across the land? What else might Jesus Christ be planning to do with His Faithful in the days ahead? 

The Unifying Leader

Perry Troyer, Plain City, OH

The church of God is precious to God and is described in Scripture as a unified body of believers. Leaders (shepherds) are called upon by God to lead the sheep to green pastures and beside still waters. They are further called to stand in the gap, to ward off the

enemy, to protect the sheep, and even to lay down their lives for the sake of the sheep.

Over the past several decades, leaders (ministers) in our plain Anabaptist churches have taken their conflicts to a different level. I'm not sure where to place blame, but I

hope to help us see the seriousness and devastating effects of church splits and divisions over personality differences.

It would be of value in the future if we would give more attention to evaluate a minister's potential on the basis of whether the individual is skilled in the art of *collaboration*. The word collaborate means to work jointly with others or bring together. The spirit of unifying is a biblical principle for all believers; especially a qualification for leadership. A collaborative leader can easily be spotted. He does not try to dominate with his own ideas as the all-seeing visionary, the leading idea generator with a controlling spirit. Instead, he views himself as a person who values the input of others and makes it possible for the creativity of others in his organization to make a contribution. The collaborative leader lessens the power distance between himself and everyone else. He believes that problems are often too complex for one person.

Jesus began the Sermon on the Mount with, "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." ("is" - present tense.) Blessed are the humble in heart. The message rings throughout the New Testament. Matthew 5:9, "Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God." Very beautiful words, soothing to the heart. I want this message to speak

to my own heart first.

Pride and envy were cast out of heaven and cannot be part of God's kingdom. Satan has been using the sins of pride, envy, and jealousy as his most effective tools. Many sins sprout from the root of pride. It shows itself in so many ways. Satan knows just how to use this tool. Then he leads us to believe we are so right. Pride is a sin of the spirit and can be difficult to detect in ourselves.

A unifying leader believes conclusions and solutions are better reached in a group setting and with a team spirit. He puts forth efforts to create a culture of cooperation, not competition. A unifying leader uses veto power very selectively and carefully. He doesn't abuse or misuse his authority. It is easy to follow and support a collaborative leader. A unifying leader creates a culture in which principles and relationships are more important than one person's touchy pride. He has a merciful sense that every successful working bond is going to require moments of forgiveness.

A collaborative leader is willing to be vulnerable. Trust is built when one person is vulnerable to others, and other persons don't take advantage of it, but are vulnerable in return. A collaborative worker understands this paradox. The unifying leader crucifies his own flesh to build strong bonds and relationships. It takes twice the effort and time to rebuild

lost trust than to lose it.

America operates under a two-party government. We are told the value of a two party system is to keep matters in check and balance, but too often this has developed into two opposing parties. We do not find this to be a scriptural principle or pattern for the New Testament church. Much more the church is to function as one body. The Holy Scriptures define the Christian life and the church in the spirit of oneness: “many members, but one body,” and “unity of the spirit in the bond of peace.” The hand is of no value detached from the body, and the body is incomplete without the hand (1 Cor. 12:12-14). Verse 25 of the same chapter says, “That there be no schism in the body.” Verse 27, “Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.” John 17 records the words Jesus prayed for us today that we might be one with Christ and with God the Father, so that the world may believe. Let’s help this prayer become reality.

Jesus told Peter, “Put up thy sword in its place; they that take the sword shall perish with the sword.” This includes our sharp tongues and hateful attitudes. Let’s take another view of true brotherhood and that which God had in mind when He established the church as His central focus.

In the struggle of my bleeding heart, I have come to the conclusion that if we as leaders would lead in the

spirit of collaboration, God would bless our efforts. Let’s take another look at God’s provision for the church, the body of Christ.

Heaven will not have walls to separate conflicting personalities. Let us take time out and re-evaluate. Many of our walls need to come down. Time is running out. We dare not linger. Lay your hammers and wrecking bars down. Park your bulldozers. Come to the altar; come to the foot of the cross. Jesus will meet you there. The love of Jesus and the blood applied will melt the walls of conflict as snow melts in 80° temperatures.

Jesus never sinned to prove a point. We need to give recognition that Scripture supports separation and withdrawal rather than apostasizing, but with true love in our hearts. However, let us be careful that we don’t separate because of personality issues or selfish reasons, rather than theological or doctrinal ones.

In John 13:34,35, Jesus said, “A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.” These words come from the heart of Jesus shortly before He was nailed to the cruel cross, where He showed us how much He loves us. Jesus had the option of calling for more than twelve legions of angels to free Him. Instead He chose to go to

the cross to set us free. This is what He meant when He said that we should love as he loved.

We can only hang our heads in shame.

Jesus came to establish peace on earth. He is looking to the ministers to take the lead in fulfilling this. Will my explanation for separation here pass the test in the final separation? 

The Folly of Assumption

Henry Tice, Grantsville, MD

“Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned: behold, the judge standeth before the door” (James 5:9). To assume is to take for granted without actual proof, to suppose or imagine. A boy was once told to go to a certain place and get a sledge hammer. He said he imagines it is not there. He was told, “In your imagination, go and get it.” Facts sometimes call for action, both corrective and instructive. Facts can be assumed to be “unfactual” and assumption is then imagined to be factual.

Years ago, vehicle registration plates all expired on the same day. Eleven days later, I was in town and in a hurry to pick up my watch on my way home. A policeman was coming towards me and in my hurry, I pulled in at the curb, and ran for the watch shop. He stopped me at the door and said, “Don’t move!”

I thought I would get a scolding for running across the road in front of him. Instead he said my registration plates are eleven days expired. He

said he would call Casselman Motors to tow my vehicle in. Furthermore, I would have to pay for the towing and storage. I gave him facts which didn’t sink in right away because he was angry.

I had the plates at home in the desk drawer, but had forgotten to put them on. I said I would call my wife to bring them out and I would put them on right there. Hurry was my motivation, but he saw me as a guilty man, trying to get onto private property before he would catch me. To his credit, he finally, slowly, gave in to my request.

Read 1 Chronicles 19. Nahash, king of the children of Ammon had died. David sent messengers to Hanun to express sympathy for the death of his father. Hanun’s princes assumed that David’s motives were to spy out the land and overthrow their nation. Hanun listened to their assumptions and treated David’s men shamefully and sent them home. When they heard that David hated what they had done, they assumed he would turn

against them in war and so hired from other nations chariots and men of war to go with them to battle. When David heard of it, he did prepare for battle against them. The end result was that the Syrians became the servants of David after 47,000 men had lost their lives in battle. And it was all because David's motive to be kind to Hanun was assumed to be hostile. That is the folly of assumption.

It is in our human nature to see ourselves in others—only it appears worse in them.

As a teenager, I learned that in trying to be smart I made a dunce of myself. After that I didn't so easily see others as thinking they are smart. The critic often reveals more about himself than of the one he criticizes.

From Romans 2:1, we see that we bring upon ourselves the very

judgment we pass on others. The folly of assumption has created many unhappy marriages, many unhappy church members, many unhappy interpersonal relationships in the work place and in the larger community.

Let us draw upon the divine nature given to us as God's children to value people for who God created them to be—with their strengths and weaknesses. Let us check the facts before we draw conclusions.

“Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, and whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things” (Phil. 4:8). 

The Gift of Tears

Dale Stoltzfus, Lewisburg, PA

A little girl was waiting her turn to receive her treat with the rest of the Sunday School class. There was a mistake somewhere. Someone forgot or didn't buy enough. She missed her treat. Everyone else got one. For a little girl, that was a reason to shed a few tears. Later, her mother questioned her about it. She said, “I telled myself, ‘Don't cry! Don't cry!’ But then I goed

ahead and cried anyway.”

Little children cry more often and over more trivial things than adults do. As we grow older, the tears we shed are usually over things that are more major than missing a treat. While God has designed that some of us are not as quick to become “basket cases” as others are, He has told us in His word to “weep with them that weep” (Romans 12:15). It

is important to empathize with the pain others are experiencing even if we have never experienced it. As the Psalmist says, “with the merciful thou (God) will show thyself merciful.”

However, there is a need for balance. One writer says that pitying a person who is depressed because of self-pity will never do any good. Sometimes pity only makes a person more depressed. Romans 12:8 tells us “he that sheweth mercy” should do it “with cheerfulness.” We cannot minister to others with perpetual hopeless tears. As we cry out to God, He can give us hope. Then He can minister to us and through us.

Tears are not necessarily a sign of weakness or femininity. David, the strong warrior and the man after God’s own heart wrote, “I am weary with groaning, all the night make I my bed to swim; I water my couch with my tears” (Psalm 6:6). The Apostle Paul described himself to the elders of Ephesus as “serving the Lord, with many tears...” (Acts 20:19). Job, the “greatest of all the ones of the east” said, “My friends scorn me but mine eye poureth out tears unto God” (Job 16:20).

If there ever was a “tough” man it was the God-man, Jesus. Scripture records that He wept openly, publicly, before going to the tomb of Lazarus. Hebrews 5:7 tells us He prayed with “strong crying and tears” to His Father who was able to save Him

from death. Tears do not always express weakness.

There certainly is a need to curb our tears sometimes. Tears should not be used to manipulate others. They should not be used to impress others with our spiritual fervor or our caring hearts. Jesus said in Matthew 6:16-18 that when we fast, we should not put on a sad countenance. We should not appear to men to fast. Wearing sackcloth seems to be an Old Testament concept that disappears in the New. Tears, like fasting, should usually be private, but sometimes tears come unplanned, unwelcomed.

Someone I know well was lying half-awake just before it was time for his alarm to go off. He was pondering the mental toil and strong fears of a close friend. Having gone through similar struggles years ago, he could feel for him. He got up and began to pour out his heart to God for his friend. With his prayers, came tears, heart-wrenching sobs. As he cried out to God, God gave him Scriptures and snatches of songs. In the place of tears, there was release, peace, and comfort. He knew God was in control. He could once again rest in Him. The Psalmist wasn’t lying when he said, “They that sow in tears shall reap in joy.”

[Used by permission from The Mid-Atlantic Informer, August, 2015.]



marriages

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

Hershberger-Hochstetler

Bro. Nevin Dean, son of Lorne and Sharon Hershberger, LaGrange, IN, and Sis. Veronica Jane, daughter of Dale and Carolyn Hochstetler, Middlebury, IN, at Fair Haven Church on Oct. 20, 2015, by Dale Hochstetler.

Jantzi-Jantzi

Bro. Dean Marcus, son of Marvin and Nina Jantzi, Wellesley, ON, and Sis. Charlene, daughter of Larry and Beatrice Jantzi, Brunner, ON, at Faith Mennonite Church for Fairhaven A.M. Church on July 4, 2015, by Arnold Jantzi.

Kreider-Kuhns

Bro. Daniel, son of Gerald and Esther Kreider, South English, IA, and Sis. Audrey, daughter of Howard and Edith Kuhns, Arthur, IL, on August 1, 2015, at New Life Tabernacle for Pleasant View Church by Howard Kuhns.

Miller-Mast

Bro. Kenneth, son of Marion and Katie Miller, Fairview, MO, and Sis. Wanda, daughter of Alton and Mary Ellen Mast, Flintville, TN, at Winchester First Baptist Church for Belvidere Mennonite Church, on Oct. 16, 2015, by Dan Byler.

Plank-Hershberger

Bro. Irvin, son of Eddie and Becky Plank, Eureka, NV, and Lydiann, daughter of Anna and the late Jacob Hershberger, Martinsburg, OH, at First Nazarene Church for Melita Fellowship Church, Martinsburg, OH, on July 11, 2015, by Alan Byler.

Raber-Nissley

Bro. Merle, son of Gerald and Fern Raber, Shipshewana, IN, and Sis. Danae, daughter of Galen and Gloria Nissley, Millersburg, IN, at Fair Haven Church on August 29, 2015, by Dale Hochstetler.

Stoltzfus-Smoker

Bro. Duane Lamar, son of Mervin and Nancy Stoltzfus, Honey Brook, PA, and Sis. Julia Fern, daughter of John and Naomi Smoker, Belleville, PA, at Valley View A.M. Church on Nov. 7, 2015, by Eli B. King, Jr.

Wagler-Weaver

Bro. Timothy, son of Bill and Janet Wagler, Summersville, KY, and Sis. Jolene, daughter of Thomas and Elaine Weaver, Summersville, KY, on Nov. 6, 2015, at First Baptist Church for Summersville Mennonite Church by James Hershberger.

Yoder-Miller

Bro. Noah, son of David and Madelyn Yoder, Rome City, IN, and Sis. Linda, daughter of Levi, Jr. and Betty Miller, LaGrange, IN, at Fair Haven Church on Oct. 10, 2015, by Wilbur Yoder.

Zook-Hostetler

Bro. Ethan, son of Miriam and the late Paul Zook, Abbeville, SC, and Sis. Melissa, daughter of Dan and Carol Hostetler, Martinsburg, OH, at First Nazarene Church for Melita Fellowship Church, Martinsburg, OH, on July 11, 2015, by Alan Byler.

Zook-Knicely

Bro. Jason Lee, son of Jesse and Laura Zook, Mifflin, PA, and Sis. Marla Beth, daughter of Warren and Annette Knicely, Harrisonburg, VA, at Dayton Mennonite Church, Dayton, VA, on Oct. 17, 2015, by Eli B. King, Jr. 

cradle roll

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

Burkholder, Morris and Karen (Raber), Lexington, IN, fifth child and son, Kameron Alex, Oct. 27, 2015.

Coblentz, Glenn and Abigail (Brumbaugh), Geneva, IN, seventh child, sixth daughter, Virginia Grace, May 19, 2015.

Coblentz, Jonathan and Loretta (Helmuth), Owenton, KY, third child, second son, Austin Glen, Sept. 4, 2015.

Frey, Elvie, Jr., and Sonya (Riehl), Goshen, IN, second child, first son, Edison Grant, Nov. 3, 2015.

Gingerich, Jared and Larita (Miller), Martinsburg, OH, third child, second daughter, Alexandria Sue, July 7, 2015.

Gingerich, Michael and Krista (Yoder), Martinsburg, OH, first child and son, Benson Drew, April 15, 2015.

Hochstedler, Paul and Sarah (Yoder), Martinsburg, OH, seventh child, fourth son, Jordan Taylor, May 31, 2015.

Hochstetler, Carl and Kristen (Miller), Goshen, IN, first child and son, Elijah David, Oct. 25, 2015.

Kuhns, Jonny and Verna (Miller), Sullivan, IL, third child and daughter, Alyssa Grace, Sept. 30, 2015.

Kurtz, Milt and Ina (Troyer), Summersville, KY, first child and daughter, Annika Hope, Sept. 6, 2015.

Mast, Quinton and Crystal (King), Summersville, KY, second child and son, Caleb Walter, Sept. 16, 2015.

Mast, Robert and Amanda (King), Vanleer, TN, fourth child, second son, Rylan Eugene, Oct. 28, 2015.

Miller, Devon and Dortha (Byler), Centerville, PA, second child and son, Draden Ariett, Oct. 19, 2015.

Miller, Timothy Paul and Lisa Arlene (Steven), Townville, PA, third child,

second daughter, Savannah Lydia, Nov. 2, 2015.

Stoltzfus, Arlin David and Charissa (Barkman), Oxford, PA, first child and daughter, Anya Christine, Nov. 11, 2015.

Stutzman, Jonathan and Irene (Miller), Townville, PA, second child, first daughter, Allison Rose, Sept. 3, 2015.

Yoder, Jonny and Kathleen (Byler), Cumberland Furnace, TN, first child and son, Tyrell Wayne, Nov. 6, 2015.

Yoder, Michael and Emma (Stoller), Berne, IN, first child and daughter, Selah Arlene, Sept. 18, 2015.

Yutzy, Jason and Julie (Miller), Grove City, MN, fourth child, second son, Christian Hans, Nov. 10, 2015.

Zook, Dwayne and Heidi (Gingerich), Double Head Cabbage, Belize, fifth child, second son, Cedar Boaz, Oct. 31, 2015.



ordinations

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

Bro. James Ellis Beachy, (wife Kimberly, Zelaya), 36, Scotland Halfmoon, Belize, was ordained as bishop of Zion Mennonite Church, on November 15, 2015. Preordination messages were given by Tim Miller, San Antonio, BZ; Tim Miller, McKenny, VA; and Hughdelle Ysaguirre, Hattieville, BZ. The charge was given by Virgil Kanagy, assisted by Hughdelle Ysaguirre, John Stephen Schrock, and Tim Miller, VA. John Stephen Schrock was also in the lot.

Bro. Peter Beachy, Jr., 40, (wife: Melody, Sommers) of Salisbury, PA, and **Bro. Derrick Bender**, 35, (wife: Cynthia Kinsinger) of Meyersdale, PA, were called by vote and voice of the church and ordained as ministers in a double ordination at Mountain View Mennonite Church, Salisbury, PA, on Oct. 25, 2015. Mervin Lapp, Latrobe, PA gave preordination messages. The charges were given by Merlin Beachy.

Bro. Matthew Bontrager, 38, (wife: Lacri, Havristiuc), Sullivan, IL, was ordained as minister at Pleasant View Church on Nov. 15, 2015. Preordination messages were given by Paul Beachy, Bastrop, TX. The charge was given by



Howard Kuhns, assisted by Wilbur Gingerich and Monroe Gingerich. Tim Kuhns and Duane Horst were also in the lot.

Bro. Jonathan Martin, 37, (wife: Lavonna, Yoder) was ordained as minister at Faith Mission Fellowship, Free Union, VA, on Oct. 25, 2015. Preordination messages were given by Jonathan Raber, Antrim, OH. The charge was given by Ivan Beachy, assisted by Lamar Hochstetler and Simon Schrock. Others in the lot were Jevon Beachy, Ivan Peachey, and Maynard Swarey.

Bro. Marion Miller, 33, (wife: Sue, Helmuth), of Goshen, IN, was chosen by lot and ordained as minister at Fair

Haven A.M. Church, Goshen, IN, on Nov. 15, 2015. Preordination messages were given by James Yoder, Nappanee, IN. The charge was given by Wilbur Yoder, assisted by James Yoder. Myron Miller was also in the lot.

Bro. John Stephen Schrock, 52, (wife Marilyn, Hochstetler), was ordained as minister for Zion Mennonite Church on November, 15, 2015. He had earlier been commissioned as minister, then three years ago, as interim bishop (see pre-ordination notes with James Ellis Beachy's ordination details). John Stephen's ordination charge was given by Virgil Kanagy, assisted by Hughdelle Ysaguirre, Tim Miller, and James Ellis Beachy. 

obituaries

Miller, Anna B., 94, of Plain City, OH, died Oct. 29, 2015. She was born Oct. 11, 1921, in Madison County, daughter of the late Eli E, and Mary Ann (Kauffman) Beachy.

She was a faithful member of Canaan Fellowship Church. She was very industrious woman and for a number of years she was an avid quilter, quilting over 200 quilts for others.

On Dec. 4, 1941, she was married to John W. Miller. He died Sept. 13, 1995. Survivors include daughters Leona (Vernon) Troyer, Mary (Edwin) Yutz,

Lola Miller, all of Plain City, OH; Waneda (Marvin) Delagrange, Grabill, IN; a son, Robert (Lorene) Miller, Plain City; foster son, Curtis (Daisy) Duff, Oakland, MD, 21 grandchildren; 34 great grandchildren, and four great great grandchildren; two sisters, Leona (Eli) Hostetler, Montezuma, GA; Katie (Phares) Rutt, Nokomis, FL; two brothers, Lester (Ida), LaGrange, IN; and Henry (Carren), Plain City; and one sister-in-law, (Pete) Mary Beachy.

She was preceded in death by two grandchildren, two great grandchildren,

two sisters, Mary and Emma and one brother, Pete; one brother-in-law, Eli Hostetler, and one sister-in-law, Carren Beachy.

The funeral was held on Nov. 1, at Canaan Fellowship Church, with Nelson Beachy officiating. Burial was in the church cemetery.

Yoder, Enos C., 90, died at Hospice House, Hutchinson, KS, Nov. 7, 2015. He was born July 29, 1925, in Haven, KS, son of the late Christian and Lizzie (Schrock) Yoder.

He was a member of Cedar Crest A.M. Church, Hutchinson.

On May 15, 1947, he was married to Clara Mae Plank at Yoder, KS. She died in January, 2009. Survivors include two sons: Glen L. and wife Clara Mae, Haven; and Ivan and wife Pamela of Hutchinson; a daughter, Katherine Huffman, Ottawa, KS; a sister Alice Eash, Haven; eight grand children and 17 great grandchildren.

He was preceded in death by a son, Wayne; sisters, Mattie Miller, Susan Mullet, and Elva Knepp; and a brother, Henry C. Yoder.

The funeral was held at Cedar Crest on Nov. 11, with Lee Nisly, Daniel Nisly and Paul Miller serving. James Shetler

conducted the committal at West Center Cemetery.

Yoder, Pauline Ruth, 66, of Kimmel, IN, died August 15, 2015, at Parkview Regional Medical Center, Fort Wayne, IN. She was born May 25, 1949, at Goshen, IN, daughter of the late Enos S. and Edna L. (Troyer) Troyer.

She was a faithful member of Woodlawn Mennonite Church. She enjoyed piecing quilts and was active in the church's sewing circle.

On Oct. 18, 1973, she was married to Levi A. Yoder. He survives. Other survivors include four daughters: Mary (Curt) Nisly, Goshen; Christina (Hank) Mullet, Millersburg; Sarah (Paul) Hochstetler, Cambier, OH; Lora (Devon) Eicher, Kimmel; a son, Marlin (Marsha) Yoder, Goshen; 23 grandchildren, four brothers: Vernon (Ida Mae) Troyer, Goshen; Wayne (Erma) Troyer, Topeka; Raymond (Lorene) Troyer, LaGrange; and Gerald (Elsie) Troyer, Shipshewana.

She was preceded in death by a sister, Mary Ellen Yutzey.

The funeral was held on August 19, with Dean Miller, Glen Miller and Arlen Bontrager serving. Steve Miller conducted the committal at the Woodlawn Cemetery. 

*When life knocks you to your knees,
pray before you try to get up.*

Otha Anders of Rustan, LA, collected pennies for at least 45 years. On October 27 he took them to the bank in 15, five-gallon, plastic water jugs. The bank's coin machine took more than five hours to count the \$5,186 stash, which was then deposited into his account. (*World*, 11-28-15)

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When a Nation Forgets God is the title of a book (2010) that recently came to my attention. A subtitle says, "Seven Lessons We Must Learn From Nazi Germany." The author is Erwin Lutzer. It is published by Moody Publishers.

Chapter titles include:

- When God is separated from government judgment results.
- That which is legal might also be evil
- Propaganda can change a nation
- Parents—not the state—are responsible for the child's training
- Ordinary heroes can make a difference
- We must exalt the Cross in the gathering darkness

There are good reasons why we feel that for us as Christians to pressure government is out of place. However, if government mandates violate Christian behavior, we believe we should obey God rather than man. To suppose that our nation was

founded on Christian principles is misguided. (exaggerates the facts? -plm) Early founders made frequent reference to our Creator. Nearly a century later, Abraham Lincoln was unapologetic in his acknowledgment of God. There are many laws that are friendly to Christian freedoms. But there is a growing antagonism toward prayer in school or other meetings directly related to the government. To me, it is not necessarily wrong and sometimes necessary to become vocal in defense of issues of moral and marital integrity. The present political climate of permissiveness is unfriendly to solid social values. The light that is not to be "hidden under a bushel" can be seen. Sometimes it can also be heard.

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Nathan Yoder's family and ancestry is a prominent part of the book, *Together in the work of the Lord: A History of the Conservative Mennonite Conference*. The book that he wrote about CMC's story reflects careful research and objective reporting. Their first conference meeting was held in 1910.

Moses Beachy made his break with the Amish church in 1927. The fact that most of this history of Nathan Yoder's book occurred during my lifetime is especially interesting to me. It is apparent that certain

attitudes and actions have predictable outcomes.

History is recorded for our learning (1 Cor. 10:11). Persons in our constituency with a teachable spirit would find a careful review of Nathan Yoder’s book very timely and helpful. History may be interesting, but it is beneficial only as we allow it to be helpful in the present.



It’s Not Your Business by Gary Miller is a book rich in its instruction for the present. This 250-page book is published by TGS International, P.O. Box 355, Berlin, OH, 44610. It has six sections.

Here are section titles:

- Business: How Involved Should I Be?
- Reconciling Jesus and the Proverbs
- The Sacred and the Secular
- Kingdom Business: An Intentional Pursuit
- The Daily Details
- An Overarching Vision

The author has experience as a builder and businessman. He is well aware of the diversity of gifting that has potential of materially furthering Kingdom interests. He is also aware of the perils of materialism which can become idolatrous. The book is easy to read. It contains examples from the author’s experience and other observations. It seems that Christians who are busy in material pursuits would be wise to make time to read it.



The coffee corner at the local Dutch Kitchen (restaurant) has regular attendees. I am not one of them. But occasionally I stop by for social benefits. Non-coffee drinkers are allowed.

I recently had an interesting conversation there with a successful businessman, now retired. The business was successful before his sons were old enough to help. When they began to be involved as adults, they sometimes wanted to change the way some things were being done. Dad knew they had more formal training than he did. But they lacked experience. It seems to me that Dad was able to accept suggestions for improvement that did not violate soundness gained by experience. So the business grew to provide employment for many and was eventually sold for a substantial sum. The owners wanted their employees to benefit from the sale and paid them a farewell bonus.

I am sharing this as a worthy example of inter-generational wisdom and success. The person with whom I had this conversation made this remark: “Methods change; principle doesn’t.”

I asked this retiree about some things he and his wife are doing for their health. He was willing to share. They feel good about the way it seems to be working. But he was low-key, not at all radical. But he did

say that he could not interest his sons in treatment that was not medically orthodox. We do not know how things would have been had they been open to alternative possibilities, but a middle-aged son died of cancer.

At this point the father does not express criticism of his sons' medical decisions. But obviously, he does not want the barrier of formal training or commitment to medical orthodoxy to control his medical choices.

-DLM

A number of months ago, Timothy Alsip, a 50-year-old homeless man with no prior criminal record walked into a bank in Portland, Oregon. He handed the teller a note stating that was "holding up the bank" and demanded a dollar. When he was given the dollar, he took a seat in the lobby to wait for law enforcement to arrive, arrest him, and take him to jail. His stated motive for this action was to gain access to the prison system in order to get free medical treatment for some health concerns he had. But his most serious charge was dismissed, leaving him with a third-degree theft charge that carries a maximum sentence of 30 days in jail, so his plan wasn't quite drastic enough to get what he wanted.

• • • • •

The story of Ben Carson's life and presidential candidacy has woven

itself into the tapestry of the national narrative surrounding the issue of race relations and racism. It would be really nice if we could all treat each other and expect to be treated without regard to the amount of pigmentation in our skin. Recent events across the nation indicate that the USA culture continues to exhibit serious need for improvement in this regard.

A group of students at the University of Missouri, including the football team, organized a protest because they felt the university president had disregarded allegations that African-American members of the student body had suffered threats and discrimination. The president resigned a few days later. An important motivation for this decision seemed to be due to the unwelcome notoriety that he accumulated through media attention related to the protests.

At the University of Kansas, professor Andrea Quenette, who is white, said she struggles to identify with the race problem because she hasn't seen or experienced very much of it. She said she hasn't seen the "N" (and she said it) word spray painted on walls. Her use of that word in that context—not directed at anybody—was part of the discussion. This was seen by some as being irresponsible, inflammatory, and bigoted. It's likely that the objections were related to more than that simple two-syllable utterance, but that was what was

highlighted as being particularly offensive. She has been placed on paid administrative leave, pending the outcome of the investigation.

The “Black Lives Matter” organization has been welcomed by some as calling much-needed attention to the perceived disparity in law enforcement practices. Others say that the nature of the campaign is racist to the core, simply by virtue of the exclusivity of its name. After all, ALL lives matter.

Who we are and how we act is a

result of a combination of factors, including our response to the grace of God, our environment, upbringing, and our choices. (Notice, I didn’t include skin color.) The problem of letting skin color affect our expectations and actions is a problem that doesn’t belong exclusively to any particular cultural demographic. Let’s all try to be part of the solution rather than contributing to this problem. Let racism not once be named among us.

-RJM 

Backing Up

Brent E. Oatney, Partridge KS

For the last 16 years I have worked with our Motorist Aid Brotherhood Sharing Plan here in Kansas. Recently, while reviewing our claims for the last couple of years, I discovered that almost half of the claims were a result of backing into something.

Naturally, I began to wonder how we might reduce the number of these accidents. What if vehicles did not come equipped with a reverse gear? I suspect we would go to great lengths to still be able to drive. Our driveways would all be circular. Our garages would have a front and rear entrance. We would be very cautious how we parked when we went to town, so we could always have a way

to drive forward. How about farm equipment? I suppose we would have a tractor for each implement, and park them accordingly, although I have not figured out how we would be able to hitch up initially to anything. Yes, having a reverse gear for our vehicles makes life much easier.

When we consider our spiritual lives, we tend to generally think about moving forward, but I would suggest there are times when we may need to back up. While there may be an individual who can back up, how often have you observed a church with a reverse gear?

In Ezra chapters 9 and 10 we have an example of God’s congregation backing up. Israel had forsaken

God's commandment (9:10) and inter-married with the people of the land (9:1), and the leaders were chief (or foremost) in this trespass (9:2). Ezra called the congregation to repentance, and the people backed up, made a covenant, and put away the foreign wives and children (10:3).

Hopefully our churches would not need to reverse on anything so significant as putting away wives and children, but I wonder if there are areas where we would be better served by backing up? My family joined the Beachy constituency 27 years ago, and I am not aware of a single case when a congregation decided something was not serving the church well and made a reversal of a previous decision. Too often changes are made by default (i.e. when enough people are doing something we will allow it) rather than by design. I suspect the Israelites in Ezra's day did not inter-marry by design, it happened gradually until it became accepted practice. Are the changes I have observed in areas of Anabaptist theology, non-conformity, non-resistance, worship, brotherhood mentality, and technology leading us nearer to God or worldliness?

So, what does Ezra 9 and 10 teach us about backing up? **First**, if a congregation is to reverse direction on an issue, the impetus must come from the Leadership. (Ezra 10:14) "Let now our rulers of all the

congregations stand, and let all of them which have taken strange wives in our cities come at appointed times, and with them the elders of every city, and the judges thereof, until the fierce wrath of our God for this matter be turned from us." We need to pray for our leaders to fulfill their calling to lead.

Second, there must be acknowledgement that we have made an error in the direction we are heading. Ezra; 9:6, "and said, O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift my face to thee, my God: for our iniquities are increased over our head, and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens." (9:15) "O Lord God of Israel Thou art righteous: for we remain yet escaped, as it is this day: behold, we are before Thee in our trespass: for we cannot stand before Thee because of this." (10:2) "And Shechaniah the son of Jehiel one of the sons of Elam, answered and said unto Ezra, we have trespassed against our God, and have taken strange wives of the people of the land: yet now there is hope in Israel concerning this thing." Can we honestly admit we have made a wrong decision?

Third, realize that God is merciful and will restore when there is repentance. Ezra 9:8, "And now for a little space grace hath been shewed from the Lord our God, to leave us a remnant to escape, and give to us a nail in His holy place, that our God may lighten our eyes, and give us a

little reviving in our bondage.” (9:9) “For we were bondmen, yet our God hath not forsaken us in our bondage, but hath extended mercy unto us in the sight of the kings of Persia, to give us a reviving, to set up the house of our God, and to repair the desolations thereof, and to give us a wall in Judah and a Jerusalem.” (9:13) “And after all that has come upon us for our evil deeds, and for our great trespass, seeing that thou our God hast punished us less than our iniquities deserve, and hast given us such deliverance as this;”

Fourth, we should remember that sin always has consequences. Ezra 10:8, “And that whosoever would not come within 3 days, according to the counsel of the princes and elders, all his substance should be forfeited, and himself separated from the congregation of those that had been carried away.” If we are traveling in the wrong direction we will not arrive at the intended destination.

Fifth, although unanimous support

would be ideal, there may be some who oppose attempts at backing up. In 10:15 Ezra actually names four who were opposed, including one who was a Levite.

Ezra, the prophets, John the Baptist, and Jesus all came with a call to repent which still echoes today. As a Christian travels on the narrow way which leads to life, there are numerous opportunities to turn onto the broad way which leads to destruction. (Matt. 7:13-14) The farther we travel onto the broad road, the farther we will need to back up to access the narrow way toward our destination. Many people have a GPS in their vehicle to help them find their destination, but I have learned these devices are not completely reliable and trustworthy. God’s Word is totally reliable to keep us on the correct path. If we have made choices individually, or as a congregation, which are leading us toward worldliness and away from Godliness, may God give individuals and leaders the courage to back up!

Of Love In Marriage

Timothy J. Myers, Keysville, GA

Why does it seem there is more need for counseling on issues relating to marriage than in other areas of life? Why are there so

many land mines in the field of matrimony?

It is, perhaps, because in that relationship is the deepest level of intimacy and the most constant

contact. It is in the daily interaction between husband and wife where one's character and personality will be most completely expressed. Any faults or weaknesses we have will surface there. And it doesn't help that we are surrounded by a culture which is increasingly obsessed with self: "It's all about me!"

"Love," as someone has said, "is the theme of every wedding. It is also the theme of every divorce." How can the supreme good described in 1 Corinthians 13 be so fickle?

Love is often misunderstood as something which comes over an unsuspecting person with little input on his or her part. Infatuation or emotion can sweep the average person up the aisle and, upon dissipation, can drag him to the divorce attorney.

Ephesians reveals a truer definition of love and marriage. It holds up the marriage union as a reflection of divine love, a metaphor of a spiritual, eternal connection with God. Love is a choice. As God's children we are called to love Him with all our heart, and soul, and mind, and strength. We should—no, we must—mirror that in our marriages.

There are many parallels between spiritual relationships and matrimonial relationships. Fulfilling the selfish desires of the flesh is destructive to both our walk with God and our relationship with our spouse. Self-giving and self-sacrifice

make both relationships blossom and flourish.

Self-centeredness morphs into many forms. Ego breeds many conflicts. Financial disagreements are said to be the greatest cause of conflict in marriage, but only when they are based on selfishness. Clashes over child-rearing, housing, travel, and clothing abound, but they stem from being self-centered.

If one partner will but love God whole-heartedly, and serve the other in any way possible without compromising principles, there can usually be peace. If both do, marriage can be experienced with all the joy and fulfillment that God intended.

There are numerous books which promise the secret to a good marriage. Many of them focus on a particular aspect: the different ways the genders think and communicate, what we enjoy most in relationship, one's childhood experiences (particularly relating to one's parents), the biblical roles of spouses, etc. All of these things are important; marriage cannot be solidly founded on just one.

The underlying foundation for a good marriage is a heart of love that unselfishly expresses itself by serving and caring. It takes more than a head-knowledge about loving and respecting, knowing how to make your mate feel appreciated, or being able to communicate in a way that fulfills your spouse's expectations. These have little value if they do

not consistently flow from a willing heart.

Some issues *tend* to be more problematic in one gender than the other: men have more problems with lust, lack of openness, and insensitivity; women, obsessing over appearance, being controlling, and gossiping.

Both genders seem equally susceptible to pride, an inordinate drive for success, and self-centeredness.

When tensions exist in the marital team, we do well to ask God to help

us see where we are contributing to them. Consider your spouse's evaluation. It is quite easy to assess these things in another, but more difficult to recognize them in yourself.

God created marriage as a metaphor of the relationship He desires with us. To spoil it is to disappoint Him, or perhaps even anger Him.

Would your spouse say your love epitomizes the love of Christ for His people?

[From Life Lines, July-August, 2015. Used by permission.] 

mission awareness

Happenings at Haynes Street

Floyd Stoltzfus

We have much to be thankful for! Recently the youth group from Pequea and some married couples visited Belize for ten days. They gave an inspiring program in song at various schools and churches in the country. They did some work projects, got stuck in the mud with their vehicles a number of times near the camp where they stayed, washed clothes on scrub boards, and visited

tourist sites. We were blessed and encouraged.

We do not feel we are stretched too thin. But God does send us enough tests and trials to keep us useful.

May the following reprint be an encouragement to all of us in the midst of the many duties we face.

STRETCHED TOO THIN

Many people back home have no idea what life is like on the foreign

mission field. Homefolks adjust to the missionary family's absence and go about life as usual. The missionary family's everyday life, on the other hand may be very unusual. Five years later they may still be adjusting.

Language is often an obstacle. They may be only learning or, at best, not be fluent. Homefolks don't realize how comfortable it is to express themselves without giving attention to the words. They had not experienced the fatigue and frustration involved in studying how to say every sentence.

Though a missionary may have thought he was prepared for cultural differences, he may often find himself frustrated as he copes with new customs and new ways of thinking. The missionary is used to starting meetings on time. The nationals may arrive on their own schedule.

Adjusting to a new culture, a new climate (which may include new diseases), new foods, and lacking home comforts such as running water, electricity, comfortable beds, a one-family car, and easy access to the supermarket may not be the hardest tests a missionary faces.

In some locations more workers are needed. When a family serves alone, Dad may be the song leader, the Sunday school teacher, and the minister in charge of all Sunday services. When two or more families serve together, there is more

fellowship, but also more potential for friction. Mission families must plan together for their individual work as well as group activities. A family is not free to decide their own course of action based on their perception of needs. The mission group must be united in their ways of carrying out mission policies. Satan loves to see a work hindered through jealousy, personality conflicts, and disagreements.

Many missionaries can identify with Paul's concerns: "Besides those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches." So many needs crowd into their schedules that missionaries may find it difficult to maintain their own close relationship with the Lord.

Foreign missionaries often struggle for answers to questions their home church never faced. How can a needy mission congregation provide for a widowed church member with six small children? How can they encourage Christian teens or mothers standing alone in the midst of immorality, dishonesty, distrust, broken homes, and threats from anti-Christian family members? How can missionaries strengthen each other in the face of physical dangers, robberies, kidnapping, and threats against them? How can missionary parents meet the educational, social, and fellowship needs of their older children in a foreign country?

Missionaries may struggle with discouragement when a sizable number forfeit church membership for various reasons. “Where did we fail?” they ask themselves. The devil knows discouragement can hinder progress.

What is the answer to all these pressures and perplexities? The missionaries should trust God. Homefolks may glibly say that, and the missionaries’ families believe it. With sincere hearts they are trying to cast their cares upon the One who has many times been their fortress and their deliverer. But demonic spirits are often a very real spiritual opposition. Pressures, sleepless nights, and the constant battle against evil take their toll physically, emotionally, and spiritually and may lead to burnout.

What can homefolks do thousands of miles away? Jesus, who said, “All power is given unto me,” also said, “Lo, I am with you always.” The same all-powerful Lord is with the missionaries and with the people at home. Holding their needs up to the source of power is supporting them, much as Aaron and Hur held up Moses’ arms until victory came. Does our failure to pray enough sometimes limit the missionaries’ abilities and successes?

One mission board chairman says, “Praying regularly with compassion about needs of specific

persons and places is better than simply praying for missionaries all over the world.” Praying is a most important service, but contacting the missionaries themselves is also needed. In *Paraguay Ponderings*, Miriam Schrock reminds us that letters from home supporters bring encouragement. “A people starved for news, soul-hungry for fellowship, lonely in the hidden corners of their hearts. No visitors to bring news, no telephones to contact far-away friends. No mailboxes, no fax machines, and no visiting ministers for months on end.

And then, letters came. ‘Letters! Letters!’ The cry resounds through the house and is joyfully echoed by each one who hears, ‘Letter!’ Quietness falls, interrupted only by rustling papers, a chuckle, or by a tidbit of news to share, interrupted only by little voices asking wistfully, ‘Did I get anything?’ and the happy squeals of delight as we joyfully hand them a bit of paper with their own name on it. The little ones were not forgotten. The dear folks at home wrote that they are praying for us daily. Our hungry hearts are stilled. Almost reverently we return to our forsaken tasks and find that these, too, are lighter. We have received letters!

[Used by permission from *ALIGHT*, A bi-monthly paper published by Christian Light Publications.] 

The Power of Influence

Alvin Lynn Miller (1944-2015), Crossville, TN

“O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is”

(Psalm 63:1).

It was summer of 1964. I was 19 years old and considered myself a “good, bad boy.” Because of the teaching and prayers of my mother, I did not indulge in some of the sins that my comrades did. But conviction was mounting.

On September 6, I attended the first service of an eight-day revival. After the service a cousin admonished me not to procrastinate. Two days later in the neighbor’s haymow, I jumped down on a bale and it rolled. For a split second I thought I was gone. Twenty-five feet below was a concrete floor—and eternity beyond! Then the bale stopped; I was safe! Fear struck me and I promised the Lord that I would go back to the revival and get right with Him.

On Saturday evening, I entered the parking lot just as another cousin came from the opposite direction. We parked side by side, walked in, and sat together. The service progressed and concluded with an invitation to receive Christ as my Savior, but conviction had fled completely. This cousin had not darkened a church door for some

time. I believe Satan had sent him as an influence to hinder the work of the Holy Spirit (2 Corinthians 11:14-15).

When I was on my way home, The Spirit returned with a forceful message: “Repent!” I became very fearful and promised the Lord that I would heed His call in the next meeting. On Sunday, when the invitation was given, I jumped to my feet.

My life made a 180° turn as I left my worldly comrades and joined a Christian youth group. They welcomed me with open arms as pictured in Romans 14:1, “Him that is weak in the faith receive ye.” In the decades since, the Lord has been a faithful Guide and Sustainer of my Christian life.

One of the most powerful influences for good in this world is the silent beauty of a holy life.

[From *Beside the Still Waters*, March 27, 2015. On August 31, 2015, Bro. Alvin suddenly departed this life while on a construction job. Note his obituary in November, 2015. Used by permission from the family.] 

Release Your Worries

Mary June Glick, Seneca, SC

New Year's day, 2016, is upon us. We are grateful for God's grace through 2015. Many of you who are reading these words went through difficult times this past year. You may be glad to turn the page to a clean chapter—a new year ahead of you. Others may be experiencing a fear, a dread of what lies ahead for you this year.

Some are looking ahead to the new year with joyful anticipation—to a new baby, a new home, a move to another area or some other adventure. Whatever your anxiety, expectation, or trepidation may be for 2016, remember that God promises to be your guide and protector. The Apostle Paul tells us to forget those things that are behind and to press on to those things ahead of us. We are living in a world of uncertainty, however, we can be assured that even if we do not know what the year ahead may hold, God knows and He will never leave us or forsake us.

God loves and cares for you personally. You are His precious daughter, created in His own image. He loves you. According to Matthew

6:25 to 34, Jesus is very much interested in our everyday routine of life. He cares whether we have our basic needs met: food, shelter, and clothing. He tells us not to worry about these things because He is **able** to meet our every need as we place our faith and trust in Him.

God delights in each one of us. He desires that we cast our care on Him, because He cares for us. He offers us PEACE, yes, even in troubled times. We hear of wars and rumors of wars, of ISIS threats, of persecution, of refugees fleeing their homes with no place to go. We wonder what is going to happen next. Yet, none of these things takes God by surprise. He is sovereign. He knows all things. In the midst of all this unrest, God says, "PEACE I give to you." He also reminds us if we come to Him, He will give us REST.

Perhaps women are tempted to struggle with worry more than men do. Man is to be protector and provider for woman. God created women with a deep capacity to love, to nurture and to care deeply about others, whether we are married or

single. We are responsible not only for our own lives, but we take on that role for those we love. As mothers, we carry the weight of responsibility for our families (which is actually our husband's job). We often take upon ourselves worries which don't belong to us. We also worry about things that never happen. Did you know that worry is not from God? It is part of our human nature. Worry can never add another minute to our life or to the lives of those we love. It is simply useless. It is wasted time.

I am thankful for the victory God has given me through the years over this sin of worry. I remember as a young mother I would imagine all types of things that could happen to our children. I finally came to realize that worry is sin; when we worry we are not trusting God. I was blessed by memorizing two verses in the Bible: Romans 6:1, 2: "*Shall we continue in sin (replace sin with worry) that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we that are dead to sin (worry) live any longer therein?*" I repeated these verses many times, especially at night when worrisome thoughts entered my mind. I also came to understand the difference between worry and concern, and that has been very helpful. *Worry is thinking about things that I cannot do anything about, whereas concern is thinking about something that I have opportunity and ability to change.* For instance, I can teach my small child

that a stove is hot and that he must not touch it, that is concern. I cannot prevent my teenager from being hit by a drunk driver, so it won't help to worry about that possibility. I can definitely pray and leave my son in God's hand.

Fear is related to worry. Fear is a normal and helpful response. Because of fear, we are more cautious. I believe every person responds to dangerous situations with fear, for instance, an attack like 9-11 caused fear in our hearts. However, to live in fear is not God's desire for us. He wants us to rest in Him. The future is under God's control. Fear robs us of peace and joy. Fear is paralyzing. It causes us to become self-conscious, focusing on our body, our family, our situation. I know of people who are so afraid of sickness they imagine all manner of illness and actually feel ill. Others are afraid of people, imagining the worst in others. There are many types of fears. However, they all remove our effectiveness in serving God and enjoying life to the fullest.

To gain victory and freedom, you must consciously release your fear and worry to God. He holds you and your family in the palm of His hand. Picture yourself in that hand, safe and secure from the storms around you, knowing that whatever will come, He will continue to hold you. Life is not always easy, or safe, or fair. But God is good, and He has a plan and a purpose for you. Rest in Him. 

The Jiggered House

Mary Ellen Beachy, Kisumu, Kenya

For quite some time we knew ancient Sophia was having problems with jiggers in her feet. We hoped her relatives or daughters would attend to her problem. No one, no one at all came to help the poor old lady who lives alone.

Her feet kept getting worse. It was affecting her sleep, and hindering her ability to walk well. So finally on a Saturday afternoon Maurice, Mark, and I went on an errand of mercy. Sophia's small hut was locked, so we walked to her nephew's house. Agre sent a child to search for Sophia, the child soon returned and said Sophia is now at home.

Most Kenyans are friendly and hospitable. The men were welcomed inside the small two roomed hut. After a prayer was offered. Morris informed her that they were there to spray the earthen floors and soak her feet in a solution to kill the jiggers.

Just what are jiggers anyhow? Find more information at www.solehope.org

Jiggers (NOT CHIGGERS– jiggers are parasitic burrowers) are small chigoe fleas that live in the dust, and are found on the dirt floors in schools and the homes of many families in Kenya, Uganda, and other similar climates.

These parasitic insects cling to and infest livestock, transferring jiggers into homes primarily in rural areas. The female jiggers burrow into the surface of skin that has been exposed to the flea. Once embedded in the body, the jigger lays eggs and creates up to pea-size egg sacks and continues to multiply by laying more eggs. These wounds are painful, and cause difficulties for victims in daily activities such as walking, playing, and attending school. While jiggers in small numbers are not deadly, the secondary infections (gangrene,

tetanus and other diseases) caused by jiggers can be fatal.

Mark was pleased that Agre and his children were helpful and began to remove the sparse furnishings from the house. They spread blankets, and her mat outside to air.

Sophias' old blue basin was filled with water. Mark was stirring in the medicine. He prayed aloud that God would use this medicine to heal Sophia's swollen infested feet. While Sophia's aching feet were soaking, Mark went indoors to spray the floor.

Suddenly, Maurice came to the doorway and called, "Pastor, spray my foot; a jigger is on my toe." Apparently, in the short time we were inside the house, a jigger (or two) decided some fresh blood would taste good. He found the teeny, tiny creature and removed it.

Mark sprayed the main room, glancing into the bedroom. He asked if everything was taken out of the bedroom. Agre sent his children into the windowless bedroom, and they brought out small trash and plastic bags from the dim room.

Armed with a good supply of spray and a small flashlight, I entered the dismal room. As the first sweep of spray hit the ground, I heard a pitter-patter like water beads on plastic. What was that?

Mark called Agre, who came in and

gingerly reached for the plastic on the floor in the corner where Sophia normally sleeps. He began pulling the plastic sheet toward himself. Suddenly he stopped, called for a jembe, (a large African hoe). Aiming well, he thumped rapidly on a 15-inch "Foo," a venomous snake that likes to rest in cool dark places! This snake is most commonly found outside when the Africans dig their shambas (fields) in preparation for planting.

The remainder of the house got sprayed in record time. All the while Mark was praying that there would be no more snakes.

Once outside, he asked Maurice, "What kept that snake from biting Sophia?"

Without missing a beat, he replied, "God—only God. You know, when that snake bites, it raises itself up about 5-6 inches in preparation to strike. But God protected Sophia."

Mark bent to inspect Sophia's foot and noticed a quarter-sized area on the side of her foot with no skin - open flesh. I told her to not bathe that part in the medication, and went to buy some powder to help heal the infection.

Mark knew that God had not only protected Sophia, God had protected him and each one that helped clean out Sophia's house. Truly, God was with us!



It's Complicated

Douglas Kauffman, Huntsville, AR

When my dad was my age, he was a father of three. I was four years old, my sister was two, and the first of four younger brothers was an infant.

I, on the other hand, am not a father. I am not married. Only one of my siblings is married – and all but one of us is old enough that we could be. We are poster children for the new cultural reality of postponed marriage.

I've heard and read a lot about this in the last few years, much of it from already-married people. There has been a bit of hand-wringing, a number of discussions about dating/courtship methods, and plenty of suggestions that fellows need to man up and get with the program. Each of these may have its place, but none of them is particularly helpful to those of us who are looking at marriage from the outside.

As a single man, I actually concur with the concern about the

postponement of marriage. I actually agree with my parents and my pastors and my other married friends in thinking that most of us should get married – and sooner rather than later. I actually think God was right when He declared “It is not good that the man should be alone.”

However, as a single man, I'm also intimately aware of the complicated cultural environment we've built up around dating and marriage. Allow me to explain – or at least make some observations.¹

I understand the move away from the potential dangers of “casual dating.” However, I think we overcorrected. Dating has become a major commitment in itself, a high-risk proposition to be agonized over and carefully analyzed. Dating is now seen more or less as a committed relationship from the get-go. We no longer date a person to get to know them; we're expected to be

pretty serious about marrying them. Breaking up is a catastrophic failure, rather than a successful conclusion to an exploratory relationship.

(As an aside, I find it interesting that the process of getting to know a person preparatory to marriage hasn't really changed all that much – it's just become less official. Since dating is such a big deal, some of what used to happen in dating now happens before dating; we call it "over-familiarity" or "pre-dating" or other such negative connotations.)

Somehow we need to de-seriousify the dating process. We need to get back to seeing dating as relatively low risk and low commitment, at least in the beginning stages. We need to make it easier to start dating – and easier to stop, if necessary. We need to allow dating to once again be a way to get to know a person and explore whether marriage is even an option – instead of needing to know that already.

Alas, I don't know exactly how to correct our overcorrection. I do, however, have a few gentle suggestions.

To men

Start asking. I know dating is a big deal, but I think the only way we'll ever make it less of a big deal is to simply try it more freely. If you're not ready to ask for "a relationship,"

consider asking for a single date – like it was in the old days.

I hear that you don't have to have your entire life in order before marriage. I'm taking the word of those who should know, but they say that it's OK to figure some things out as you go. They also say that you'll never feel completely ready, so maybe just go for it.

Don't be intimidated by a lady's goals, passions, achievements, or other impressivenesses. I know that some of us are a little scared of dating that girl who looks like she's really got it together. However, I have it on good authority that at least some of them are pretty open to the idea of marriage, so there you go. It can't hurt to at least try.

Don't be disheartened by getting turned down. I know we are living in difficult times. But take heart, brother. Maybe the next girl you ask will have read this article.

To ladies

Say yes.² Give us a chance. We get a lot of grief for not asking girls to date. The truth is that many of us have asked and have been turned down, some of us multiple times. I know that saying yes can be scary, because dating is a big deal. But asking you out is also scary, because dating is a big deal. So if we could work together to make dating a little less of a big

deal, that would be great. We'll be more OK with asking if you're more OK with saying yes. Deal?

Invite relationship. Be friendly. For some of you, this is not a problem. (And for just a few of you, this is really not a problem... and that's a problem.) But it seems like a few of you actually avoid fellows you like because you're afraid of being too forward. I know there's a fine line there somewhere, but it's OK to be available.

Be aware that some otherwise fine men are easily intimidated – especially if you're a strong, successful, or otherwise impressive lady. I say this only so that you're aware of it, not because you need to change. But if the above characteristics apply to you, and if you want to get married, it might not hurt to make an extra effort to be personable and relatable.

To dads of ladies

Please be OK with dating being a little less of a big deal. Be open to different approaches, such as approving a date instead of a relationship, or allowing a more casual get-to-know-each-other time if the man doesn't know your daughter well.

Please check us out, but please don't make us run the proverbial gauntlet before getting permission to date your daughter. Dating should

be a time for both you and your daughter to get to know the man and determine if marriage is an option or not. You don't have to fully determine that before allowing us to date.

Be involved, but help us be men. That might mean giving us your blessing and telling us to figure it out, or making us ask your daughter for a date instead of doing the work for us. This may be counter intuitive, but in the long run this type of approach might make dating a little less scary by keeping it uncomplicated and straightforward.

To everyone

Older married people, we know that you think we need to just get with it and start dating. But please realize that things are different now, and in some ways you helped create the environment that we are now dealing with. Not only is dating a much more serious matter than it was in your day, but we also have more spousal options than any previous generation, thanks to our increased interconnectedness. We have a lot more choices and simultaneously a lot more pressure to choose correctly the first time.

Dating should be an opportunity to get better acquainted and determine if marriage is a feasible option. In other words, it's OK for two people to not know each other very well before

dating. That's what dating is for.

Dating is not engagement. Make less "fuss" about newly-dating couples. Don't start discussing wedding plans when a couple goes on their first date.

Breaking up is OK. It means that dating was successful.

We need to broaden our concept of God's will for a spouse (and for many other things). It's probably a mistake to wait for Him to reveal "the One." Maybe His will is actually pretty simple: Love God. Find a person of the opposite sex who loves God and who also loves you. Marry that person. That may be just a little over-simplified, but you get the picture; what God hath made straightforward, let not man make unnecessarily complicated.³

We need to be more OK with people desiring marriage. There's a bit of a stigma attached to a desire for marriage. That desire is God-given, and people who admit to it are not "desperate."

We also need to be more OK with different methods of finding a partner. For many, the traditional courtship routine works fine. But for some, the story may play out differently. If we're really OK with the possibility of God moving in mysterious ways, there may even be opportunities for such things as

blind dates, random run-ins, and first-time acquaintances to result in happy endings.

Make no mistake, we must continue to hold the bar high regarding the sanctity of marriage and purity in courtship. We dare not minimize the high stakes inherent in such a relationship. However, we could also afford to lower the bar in some ways in the initial stages. If marriage is as desirable as it's chalked up to be, let's remove unnecessary roadblocks and make it easier to achieve. I am convinced there are ways we can do that and still have relationships that glorify God and honor each other.

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(Endnotes)

¹ My thoughts on this issue are obviously based on my personal experience and observations.

² I won't even attempt to explain everything I don't mean by that statement. Just assume that I have considered all the potential disclaimers. If this makes it better, here's a lady saying pretty much the same thing: <https://thedatingmanifesto.wordpress.com/just-say-yes/>

³ For more on the topic of finding God's will, see Kevin DeYoung's excellent book *Just Do Something: A Liberating Approach to Finding God's Will*.



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Periodicals

THOUGHT GEMS

The scary thing about heredity and environment is that parents provide both.

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Some of the best home furnishings are children.

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It is a good idea to test new ideas on old friends.

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The road to failure is paved with indifference.

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Things would improve with less television and more vision.

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Small deeds done are better than great deeds planned.

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Luck may be part of getting a job, but it takes more than luck to keep one.

• • • • •

There's nothing so kingly as kindness and nothing so royal as truth.

• • • • •

Good education is less about having the head full of facts
and more about where to find facts.

• • • • •

A casino is a place where someone is likely to go broke trying to get rich.

• • • • •

It does little good to sit up and take notice if you stay sitting.

• • • • •

It may be easier to follow the leader than to lead the followers.

• • • • •

No man has a good enough memory to be a successful liar.