



Calvary

MESSENGER

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

Galatians 6:14

FEBRUARY 2020

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Calvary Messenger

February 2020

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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What if...

Wilma Webb, Spencerville, IN


What if... we helped someone in need
instead of tight'ning hands in greed?

What if... we spoke a word of cheer
instead of dwelling on our fears?

What if... we prayed for those in sin,
and God revealed our pride within?

What if... we learned to praise, not pout,
to lift the hearts of those about?

What if... we walked through every day
to honor Christ in all our ways?

Would we... be changed and others too,
because we did what Christ would do? 



In Conjunction

“I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me” (John 17:23).

The sun had just set on the western horizon. In the darkening sky were several “stars” that made their gradual appearance. They appeared very close together, only several finger-widths at an arm’s length. This event in astronomy is called a conjunction. A conjunction, as a phenomenon of perspective, is an event that involves two astronomical bodies seen by an observer on Earth.

The greatest and largest (in mass) unobserved parts of God’s creation are the objects in the night sky. While only an infinitesimal part of the universe is visible to the naked eye, even that small part is very awe-inspiring and humbling when we take the time to observe it. Many times, we hold the importance of the billions of stars as casually as their creation seems to be recorded in Genesis 1:16, “he made the stars also.” Since the inception of common man-made light, we have difficulty seeing God’s creation in the night sky. Many beautiful sights in the night sky pass unobserved while we close our eyes in sleep.

Along with solar and lunar eclipses, conjunctions in astronomy are only phenomena in perspective. From our location, we observe two planets in a similar way as when two trees line up with our line of sight. When we move, these trees seem to move closer, even though they may be hundreds of feet apart. Several months ago, the planet Mercury “scooted” across the sun’s face while observers with protective solar filters on magnifying equipment watched it go. That event will not be visible from Earth again until 2032. It may have seemed near the sun, but Mercury’s distance from the sun varies between 28.5 million and 43.5 million miles. And while planets in conjunction may seem to be very near to each other—a mere three finger-widths or five degrees apart—they are likely hundreds of millions of miles apart.

God has called His children to be like Him and to be one with Him as Christ and the Father are one. “That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that

thou hast sent me” (John 17:21). This oneness is not only with the Godhead, but it is also a oneness with each other in the body of believers. This closeness, or love for each other, is an outstanding witness to the world, as they observe this spiritual *conjunction* with each other and God.

One distinctive part of Christianity is the privilege to have a close or personal relationship with our Savior and God. Our Father approaches earthlings, seeking to draw us close to Himself. The Hebrews writer calls us to “draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water” (Hebrews 10:22). Jesus promised that the Comforter would come to us. “I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you” (John 14:18).

We observe the change in *conjunction* of Adam and Eve with God after they fell into sin. Before sin, they enjoyed a closeness with their Creator as He walked with them in the cool of the day. After sin, they were afraid of God and ashamed of each other. They tried to hide their sinfulness from Him. But God, in His abundant love, took our sinfulness upon His Son, Jesus. Now we can enjoy closeness with our God. “Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need” (Hebrews 4:16). This *conjunction* is not a mere phenomenon of perspective, but it is a spiritual reality. It is not only an appearance of

closeness, but we can have the Spirit of God abiding *within* our hearts!

Sometimes we encounter people who seem to be very godly. In fact, they may profess to have a close walk with God. There may even appear to be a miraculous outworking of the Holy Spirit in their lives. How do we know whether it is reality or only a phenomenon of perspective? Maybe we are only aligning several points in relation to the Son. Maybe the relationship only appears to be close.


We would do ourselves a disservice by not searching our own hearts. Do I walk in the light of the Son and reflect His glory? Do I enjoy the piercing rays of His Word in my heart? Does my brother’s word of admonition awaken my spirit to the dark side of my world? Does my life bear good or corrupt fruit? “Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them” (Matthew 7:15-20).

May we allow the light of the Son to shine brightly in our hearts to cleanse us of sin and darkness within. God has all the power needed to forgive our sin

and to give us power over our old man, depending on the level of freedom He has in our hearts.

“For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the *inner* man; that Christ may *dwell in your hearts* by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend

with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be *filled* with all the fulness of God. Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh *in* us, unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen” (Ephesians 3:14-21). (italics mine)

-AY 

Announcement

2020 Marriage Enrichment Seminar

Held at: Deeper Life Ministries | March 27-29, 2020

Topics:

A Portrait of Christ's Love - Dave Snyder

Following the Rationale - Dave Snyder

Feeling the Emotions - Ben Waldner

Setting Goals - Denver Yoder

Testimony: “*Walking Together Through Life*” - Kenton & Wendy Martin, PA

Cultivating Loyalty - Ben Waldner

Worshipping Together - Denver Yoder

Registration deadline: March 15, 2020.

For more information or to register, please call 614-873-1199 or email info@dlmohio.org. This seminar is sponsored and hosted by:

Deeper Life Ministries

5123 Converse Huff Rd. | Plain City, OH 43064

Phone: 614-873-1199

Email: info@dlmohio.org 

The Kingdom Controversy

Aaron Lapp, Kinzers, PA

Once again, the controversy of the kingdoms has surfaced into an issue of difficulty, dialogue, and dead ends. The big question is set up for conjecture, confusion, and contention. Some people in every generation of Christians bring up the possible differences of the recorded words of Jesus regarding the kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of God. The presupposition is that heaven and God cannot be the same. How can two distinct words refer to the same thing, they ask?

The natural place for the controversy to arise is in a Sunday School class or in a group Bible study. To bring up a situation without a ready answer will undercut and discredit the teacher. Something as simple as what Jesus spoke of many, many times should have an easy answer, or it may depreciate even our Lord Jesus who gave these two concepts in the first place.

It is an immediate error to suppose that there are two different kingdoms

that pertain to God. God is one, indivisible. All that pertains to God is brought together into one entity. *Kingdoms* in the plural always refer to the kingdoms of this world. If the kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of God are separate and distinct in their own right, then one would refer to them as the kingdoms of what? Preposterous! *Preposterous* carries the idea as being “so contrary to nature, reason, or common sense as to be laughable; absurd; ridiculous” (Webster). The kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of God are not laughable, but the man-made controversy is extended at length by certain people, which begins to become that way as contrary to Biblical understanding and even more so as contrary to Biblical faith.

The Old Testament refers to the kingdom of David and at the same time the kingdom of Israel. In I Chronicles 17:11-15, Nathan the prophet spoke to David the words of God, wherein God says, “And I will establish his kingdom.” Those

words following in his speech about that kingdom was his house, his throne, his seed, his governance, and then repeats, “but I will settle him in mine house and in my kingdom forever: and his throne shall be established forever.” That kingdom included his house, his throne, his seed, his subjected people, his land, and his government in a complete and total way. It all was referred to as the kingdom of David or the kingdom of Israel, being one and the same. David was the king, whereby his person was the singular and sole representative of his kingdom. None of his chief captains, the treasurer, the high priest, or any prominent prophet could make any claim to the kingdom overall. His geographic land was the extent of his reign, within recognized borders, that included all its cities, mountains, cultivated land and pastures, and rivers and lakes. I intentionally give needless detail for those who still wish to separate the kingdom of heaven from the kingdom of God in some unnecessary hair-splitting. David was the king over all that pertained to him, which could be called his kingdom. It was recognized as one kingdom, whether it was referred to as the kingdom of David or the kingdom of Israel.

God, in that same way as an earthly

counterpart, is the Eternal Being, the single one and only personage as King, as ruler and sovereign over all, indivisible, complete, and entire in Himself. As King, the whole of His Being is the whole and totality of His kingdom that Jesus spoke of as the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God is in direct reference to His person that I prefer to call His being.

The kingdom of heaven is where He dwells, as it is spoken of in numerous places in the Old Testament in particular as well as in the New Testament. The kingdom of heaven refers to His dwelling place in heaven. There is no Biblical way to separate heaven from God. Heaven is referred to as the place of His throne from whence He rules and reigns. The kingdom of heaven is His “center of operations,” using an earthly concept. The kingdom of heaven, as God’s dwelling place, is synonymous to the kingdom of God in reference to His Person.

Jesus “said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand” (Matthew 12:25). Dividing, or trying to separate that which is of God is seen as a distinct error, and as being outside of faith toward God and all that pertains to Him. Satan sows the seeds of

contention and controversy that our Lord called “the tares” in His illustrative parable in Matthew 13. Jesus said, “The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; And shall cast them into a furnace of fire; there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth” (Matthew 13:41, 42).

In Matthew 13 Jesus mentions the *kingdom of heaven* eight times along with *the word of the kingdom*, *the children of the kingdom*, *his kingdom*, and the *kingdom of their Father* all in a single and integrated flow of teaching. The farther we go in this study, the more we see how the word *preposterous* applies to any man-

made attempts to divide what God has joined in one, in this case, the kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of God as being one and the same.

The Bottom Line is that there are two kingdoms, known as the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan, the kingdom of light and the kingdom of darkness, or the kingdom of truth and the kingdom of lies. The clearer we are about those two opposing kingdoms, the dearer will be our heart’s embrace of the kingdom of God with its center in heaven, and God’s glorious kingdom at that location. This kingdom is known by His people as the kingdom of heaven that singly belongs to Him and is identified as the kingdom of God.



Why I am a Church Member

John E. Glick, Narvon, PA

I am a church member by choice. I acknowledge that not all my choices in life have been good, but I consider the decision to become a member of a local congregation to be one of the best I ever made. Countless blessings have been and still are mine because I’m a church member. In fact, I consider it dangerous to not be a part of a body of believers.

In his letter to the Corinthians the Apostle Paul likened the church to the human body. The physical body is made up of many members. Being connected to the body is essential for the life and function of every member. For any member to be cut off means death for that particular member. How then do we expect to survive in our spiritual lives if we are not connected to the church? Paul said to

the Ephesians “we are members one of another” (Ephesians 4:25b).

We become members of the body of Christ by virtue of the new birth. The universal church of Christ is made up of all who repent and believe in Jesus. To be a new creature in Christ means we have something in common with all others who are experiencing this new life. But what about officially being a member of a local church? Some consider such to be an unnecessary legality. Apparently, some church groups feel they can better function without an official membership. Anyone who attends and seems to be a Christian is given similar privileges to participate in the activities and communion of the church.

I believe the Bible gives us light on this subject. I wish to give my understanding of the Scripture without passing judgment on those who understand and practice otherwise. I will give several Scriptures that help form my conviction for church membership.

Acts 2:41, 42, “Then they that gladly received his word were baptized, and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they continued steadfastly in the apostle’s doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.”

Acts 2:47, “And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.”

Acts 16:5, “And so were the churches established in the faith, and increased in number daily.”

These and other Scriptures indicate that the early church had a membership roll, made up of those who believed and were baptized.

Hebrews 13:17 speaks of Christians obeying those who rule over them. Who do we obey if we don’t belong to a certain church? It says the pastors must give account for those under their care. Who do they give account for if they don’t know who is a member? The New Testament also gives clear teaching on the necessity of removing those members who fall into sin. We call this excommunication.

To have no official membership seems to present a dilemma as to whom and how to excommunicate. I believe the Bible teaches a clear way into the church and a clear way out, so that there is no question as to who is and who isn’t a member.

I’m saying that I am a church member because I believe it to be Biblical. But there’s more to it than simply being what God requires. What He asks of us is not without purpose. It is for His glory and also for our well-being. I will share several ways in which I benefit from being a member of a body of believers.

1. Security - God made us social beings. We thrive on healthy

relationships with others. As Christians we share with each other on a spiritual level. This fellowship fulfills a vital need in our lives. In the church we weep together and rejoice together. We are there to help each other in time of need. I am also confident that if I go wrong there are brethren in the church who will help me see the error of my ways.

All this brings a security to my Christian life that cannot be experienced outside of the church.

2. Opportunity - Members of the body of Christ have been given various Holy Spirit gifts. These are not meant to be for our personal advantage but for the good of the members collectively. As part of the church we have the opportunity to minister to each other by exercising our gifts. No one has all the needed gifts. But each one's gift is needed for the body to function for the glory of God. By joining our efforts, much more can be accomplished than what one could do alone. The mission outreach of a church is usually the result of many people contributing in a variety of ways. Within the church we also have the opportunity to share together in ordinances such as baptism, communion, feet washing, and others. These could hardly be observed in a Scriptural way by one's self. Church membership gives me the opportunity to fulfill God's calling for my life.

3. Identity - Ever since the birth of the church, sincere believers have chosen to identify with the body of Christ. For some this was done at great cost. Baptism gives public expression to our decision to leave the life of sin behind and cast our lot with the people of God. Some people take pride in identifying with certain clubs, sports teams, or secular causes. Sometimes one's appearance gives evidence of whom he or she wishes to identify with. There is no organization on earth that I would rather identify with than the church of Jesus Christ. I am not ashamed to tell others that I am a member of my local congregation. Hopefully this identity will always make me stand out as one different from unregenerate society around me.

I conclude that it is a great privilege to be a member of the church. Only the blood and power of Jesus make that possible for me. I intend that my membership in the body of Christ has no expiration date. I consider it to be eternal. I hope to be there when that great multitude from all nations, kindreds, people, and tongues joins together to give glory to the Lamb. And while still limited by the boundaries of this earthly life, I wish to keep my name on the membership roll of my local congregation.



Early Childhood Development that Prepares for School

Victor Ebersole, Winchester, VA

The first five years of a child's life lay the foundation for future failure or success. Bit by bit, he accumulates the knowledge and abilities he will need to be a complete, independent adult. From the first moment in the womb when he responds to his mother's voice, he is processing and reacting to information given to him. The first five years of a child's life contain a dramatic transformation from a helpless infant into a self-aware first grader. During that time, his brain develops more and faster than at any other period during his life. What skills will we equip him with to prepare him for this big step toward independence?

There are five basic areas I would like to consider as we prepare our child for first grade: physical, emotional, social, moral, and academic. Each of these skills develops gradually and at different rates in each child. God has created every individual with a peculiar set of gifts and challenges. Very likely, your child will excel in

some areas and struggle in others.

Physical Abilities

Physical abilities are divided into gross motor skills and fine motor skills. These skills are important not only for muscle development but also for the brain processes they foster. Gross motor skills refer to the movement of large muscle groups. This involves activities such as crawling, jumping, skipping, kicking, etc. Fine motor skills refer to the ability to make precise movements with the fingers. We often call this eye-hand coordination. Examples are as simple as a baby grasping his mother's finger and as complex as a preschooler cutting a paper snowflake. Children love to do these things and spend much of their playtime developing these skills. While remarkable progress is obvious from one year to the next, these skills take time and repeated practice to develop. At every age, a child needs a safe environment to practice. Clear the floor when he is learning to walk. Make sure the path is wide

and open before letting him go on his bike. Riding requires incredible coordination of balance, momentum, and direction! Yes, he will fall and hurt himself, but the next time he tries, he will do better. Success is achieved through repeated failure. Provide a time and place for him to scribble, draw, color, cut, and paste. Compliment his work! A four-year-old can create incredible creatures!

Emotional Maturity

A child is born with very little emotional control. He expresses exactly what he feels. A toddler pitches a fit when he isn't allowed to have your book. A two-year-old will flop on the floor and scream when he is denied a cracker. Parents are responsible to teach a child how to properly express his feelings. Proverbs 16:32 says, "he that ruleth his spirit [is better] than he that taketh a city." We cannot remove our child's emotions; nor would we want to. Emotions—even negative emotions such as fear and sorrow—are natural and right. A child must learn first to control his actions in spite of his emotions and then to communicate his emotions properly to others. Instead of hitting his brother in a fit of rage for stealing his toy, he must be taught to control his anger and

ask an authority to set things right. This applies to all negative emotions: fear of the dark or unknown, anger at real or perceived mistreatment, disappointments for not receiving something expected, or frustration in difficult circumstances. A child eventually will learn that all of these are a normal part of life. Parents who equip their child to properly handle his spirit in the face of life's challenges give him a priceless gift.

Parents also need to give their children a proper level of self-confidence. Parents who consistently criticize their child's efforts communicate that he is a failure. A child needs confirmation that he is loved and valued for who he is. He craves the approval of his parents and strives to earn compliments. Insincere or undeserved compliments may actually backfire and cause him to base his value on whether he receives praise and not for doing a task to the best of his ability.

Social Skills

Before a child is ready for school; he will also need to learn social skills. God made us social creatures. We enjoy being with other people. To have working relationships, we need to follow some basic rules. First, a child must learn that other people

have desires and preferences too. His favorite game is not everyone's favorite game. Sometimes he needs to play a game he dislikes. He needs to learn to share and take turns. He doesn't always need to be at the front of the line. We call it the Golden Rule: Do unto others as you would have them do unto you. Second, a child should learn to allow others to talk. This is easier for some children than others. Proverbs 18:24 says, "A man that hath friends must shew himself friendly." Teach your child to take an interest in what others know. Teach him not to dominate the conversation but to allow others to add their perspective. Third, a child should learn to use good manners. A simple "Please," "Thank you," or "I'm sorry" goes a long way to making smooth relationships in the classroom. If you teach your child to use common courtesies with his siblings as he grows, it will be a habit by the time he enters first grade. Last, teach your child to care for himself. Teach him to blow his nose, tie his shoes, and tuck in his shirttail. His teacher may need to remind him occasionally, but he should be accustomed to good hygiene before he is old enough to venture out on his own.

Moral Character

A child's moral character is the most important area a child needs to develop before going to school. I see two reasons for this. First, the early years form the child's view of his world. He establishes relationships with his parents and siblings. He understands how he fits into the social structure of his family. He comes to understand that he is a unique individual. How do his siblings treat him? How do they respond when he is kind or mean to them? As he explores his world and its boundaries, he begins his life-long adventure of learning. Second, his concept of right and wrong creates the framework for how he will approach life. Does "No" really mean "No"? Does he always need to obey directions? What will happen if he does what he wants to do? He begins to develop a perspective of the nature of authority. While he will eventually come to understand that not all authorities behave in the same way, it is in childhood that he realizes that authority is either a force to be respected and obeyed or a tool to be manipulated and used. The framework that you build for your child will be with him for life. Proverbs 22:6 states, "Train up a child


in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.” There are exceptions to this general statement. However, those who walk away from Truth will always carry its knowledge in their conscience. The primary purpose of our schools is to educate our children in a God-centered atmosphere. The teacher will need to discipline at times, but that is not his primary responsibility. A child who has a healthy respect and appreciation for authority frees the teacher to teach. By the time a child enters school, he should be in the habit of obeying promptly. He should take responsibility for his actions. He must be honest, even when it may hurt him. He must be used to a conscience kept clear and pure by consistent discipline.

Academic Achievement

Finally, we come to academic skills. In some ways, these skills require the least amount of energy from a parent. The teacher’s job is to teach. If a child has learned to listen and control his spirit, he will be able to use his time in school to great advantage. Children love to learn. Most of their play activities center around the skills that they are learning. Stacking blocks can teach them to count and identify the shapes/letters/numbers on each block.

Simple puzzles teach them to identify and match shapes. A Memory game helps them to recall the location of a picture. Crayons help them to identify the colors of objects in the real world. Identifying the letters of his name and tracing them brings particular excitement. Playing house sparks the imagination in acting out the role of someone other than himself. Giving your child regular chores also develops important learning skills. Most chores incorporate various aspects of academics. Something as simple as setting the table may include multiple skills. He may need to count the number of place settings, so he has the right number of cups. You may ask him to set the table in a sequence, so nothing is missed. As he does these chores, he develops thought processes that will help him in school.

As I consider the wonderfully complex process of growing and learning, I echo the words of the psalmist, “I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvelous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well.” God bless you with wisdom as you prepare your toddlers for school.

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marriages

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

Gerber-Ropp

Bro. Edwin, son of Clare and Gwendolyn Gerber, Wingham, ON, and Sis. Kaitlyn, daughter of Larry and Susan Ropp, Lucknow, ON, on March 17, 2019, at Lucknow Christian Reformed Church for Whitechurch Amish Mennonite Church by Larry Ropp.

Gingerich-Miller

Bro. Marlin, Pounding Mill, VA, son of Fred and Lillian Gingerich, KY, and Sis. Janessa, daughter of Lloyd and Ruth Miller, Pounding Mill, VA, on October 5, 2019, at Destiny Outreach Ministries for Stillwaters Mennonite Church of Tazewell by Paul Weaver.

Martin-Mast

Bro. Titus, son of Jeffrey and Maribeth Martin, Butler, OH, and Sis. Ruthanna, daughter of Daniel and Lois Mast, Crossville, TN, on December 6, 2019, at the Linary Church of Christ for Mt. Moriah Mennonite Church by John Mast.

Miller-Kurtz

Bro. David, son of Donald and Donna Miller, Hutchinson, KS, and Sis. Julia, daughter of Joseph and Sylvia Kurtz, Mannsville, NY, on April 27, 2019, at

Crystal Light Mennonite Church for Northern Light Christian Fellowship by Wilmer Peachey.

Miller-Otto

Bro. Laban, son of John and Emma Miller, Crossville, TN, and Sis. Gloria, daughter of David and Miriam Otto, Crossville, TN, on November 16, 2019, at First United Methodist Church for Mt. Moriah Mennonite Church by John Mast.

Stanciuc-Landis

Bro. Marius, son of Gheorghe and Adriana Stanciuc, Suceava, Romania, and Sis. Audrey, daughter of Anthony and Sandra Landis, Denver, PA, on June 8, 2019, at Suceava Mennonite Church by Titus Miller.

Stoltzfus-Weaver

Bro. Jesse, son of Mahlon and Abigail Stoltzfus, Killbuck, OH, and Sis. Cheryl, daughter of Chris and Ruthie Weaver, Cochran, PA, on November 2, 2019, at Pleasant View Church for Living Hope Mennonite Church by Ethan Wagler.

Yoder-Yoder

Bro. Sheldon David, son of Eldon and Paula (Kurtz) Yoder, Aroda, VA, and Sis. Joanne Marie, daughter of Paul and Linda (Nisley) Yoder, Sarasota, FL, on December 7, 2019, at Sunnyside Mennonite Church, Sarasota, FL, by Bill Yoder.



cradle roll

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

Beiler, Dustin and KrisAnne (Burkholder), Mt. Pleasant, PA, third child and son, Antoine Reed, November 7, 2019.

Garber, Verlin and Larissa (Yoder), Hartselle, AL, third child and daughter, Violet Hope, December 10, 2019.

Gerber, Alvin and Juanita (Ropp), Bluevale, ON, second child and son, Patrick Sean, May 30, 2019.

Gerber, Jonathan and Joanne (Lebold), Lucknow, ON, first child and son, Joel David Carl, November 3, 2019.

Goff, Justin and Sarah (Schrock), Scotland Halfmoon, Belize, fifth child, third daughter, Amarissa Joy, December 17, 2019.

Hoover, David and Caryn (Yoder), Burkesville, KY, second child, first daughter, Kyla Cherise, November 5, 2019.

Kauffman, Daryl and Marlene (Yoder), Belleville, PA, third child, second daughter, Mylah Joy, November 26, 2019.

Kurtz, Milt and Ina (Troyer), Greensburg, KY, third child, first son, Tye Milton, November 23, 2019.

Lebold, Joshua and Debbie (Ropp), Bluevale, ON, second child, first son, Lucas Samuel, September 9, 2019.

Miller, Andrew and Mihaela (Mareci), Pătrăuți, Suceava, Romania, fourth child and son, Enos, December 4, 2019.

Miller, Karlin and Rosemary (Zook), Ripley, WV, sixth child, third son, Nathaniel Karlin Rafael, October 24, 2019.

Miller, Nathan and Nora (Schmucker), Călinești-Vasilache, Suceava, Romania, first child and daughter, Ivanna, November 14, 2019.

Miller, Philip and Jessica (Graber), Oskaloosa, KS, fifth child, third daughter, Jade Maris, November 8, 2019.

Schander, Heinrich and Candace (Martin), Keene, TX, third child (one deceased), second son, Isaac Yeshua, November 25, 2019.

Swartzentruber, Gary and Lynita (Yoder), Swanton, MD, fourth child and son, Shawn David, November 21, 2019.

Thayer, Alex and Laura (Flokstra), Perkins, OK, first child and son, Adrian Levi, October 25, 2019.

Theus, Hervin and Ann (Lehman), Scotland Halfmoon, Belize, second child, first son, Elijah Lee, December 12, 2019.

Troyer, Jesse and Malinda (Yoder), Crossville, TN, fourth child, second daughter, MaKayla Jade, December 15, 2019.

Ulrich, Ivan and Jessica (Yoder), Keene, TX, first child and son, Edmund Piper, November 21, 2019.

Weaver, Andre and Sharon (Miller), Tazewell, VA, third child and daughter, Alisa Ranelle, November 4, 2019.

Weaver, Ernest and Patricia (Miller), Grandview, TX, sixth child, third daughter, Eleanor Faith, November 10, 2019.


Weaver, Jonas and Bernice (Yoder), Oskaloosa, KS, third child, second daughter, Alisha Joy, August 5, 2019.

Yoder, Chris and Charla (Funk), Oskaloosa, KS, third child, second daughter, Janiah Kay, November 25, 2019.

Yoder, Enos and Gretchen (Steria), Lowville, NY, second child and son, Ernest Lynn, October 15, 2019.

Yoder, Kyle and Kendra (Eash), Auburn, KY, fourth child, third daughter, Tara Addyson, December 27, 2019.

Yoder, Roman and Brenda (Miller), Clarkson, KY, eighth child, sixth daughter (one deceased), Denise Ann, November 19, 2019.

Zook, Jesse and Marilyn (Peachey), Mifflintown, PA, first child and son, Felix Andrew, November 6, 2019. 


ordinations

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

Bro. Glenn Coblentz, 39, (wife, Abigail Brumbaugh) was ordained as minister for Christian Mission Fellowship, Berne, IN, on November 24, 2019. Preordination messages were by Marvin Beachy. The charge was given by Maynard Nisly, assisted by Marvin Beachy and Roman Miller.

Bro. Nate Mast, 29, (wife, Marylou Jantzi), Monkton, ON, was ordained as minister for Fellowship Haven Church, on December 1, 2019. Preordination messages were brought by Melvin Beiler. The charge was given by John Byler, assisted by Laverne Ropp and Arnold Jantzi. Darryl Kuepfer shared the lot.

Bro. Gerald Miller, (wife, Ruth), Limestone, TN, commissioned as missionary pastor for Masters International Ministries, Ukraine, on November 17, 2019 at Greene County Mennonite Church, Chuckey, TN, by Jim Gingrich and Raymond Fisher.

Bro. Justin Yoder, (wife, Melissa Good), Henderson, NY, at Northern Light Christian Fellowship on November 17, 2019. Preordination messages were given by Tim Yoder, Vanleer, TN. Charge was given by Wilmer Peachey, assisted by David Peachey and Larry Ropp. Titus Peachey shared in the lot. 



obituaries

Nisly, Elmer, 79, died Tuesday, June 25, 2019, at Hutchinson Regional Medical Center. He was born October 20, 1939, at Hutchinson, to Edward D. and Elizabeth (Yoder) Nisly.

He was a member of Center Amish Mennonite Church. Elmer was a retired dairy farmer. Offender victim ministries and prison ministries were an important interest to Elmer.

On March 1, 1964, he married Cora C. Yoder in Montezuma, GA. His wife, Cora, of over 55 years, survives, along with his children: Yvonne Sommers and husband David of Oswego; Violet Byler and husband Larry of Hutchinson; Brenda Nisly and husband Arlyn of Partridge; and Julian and wife Bertha of Hutchinson; siblings: Vera Nisly, Barbara Miller, William, Harley, Larry, and John Nisly, all of Hutchinson; and Lester Nisly of South Carolina; 16 grandchildren; and two great-grandchildren.

He was preceded in death by his parents; brother, Daniel; and sister, Laura Nisly.

The funeral service was held on

Saturday, June 29, 2019, at Center Amish Mennonite Church with LaVerne Miller, David Yoder, and Dwight Miller officiating. Burial followed in West Center Cemetery.

Nisly, Vera Mae, 89, of Hutchinson, died August 1, 2019, at Mennonite Friendship Communities, South Hutchinson. She was born June 17, 1930, in Hutchinson, to Edward D. and Elizabeth (Yoder) Nisly.

Vera was a graduate of the Grace Hospital School of Nursing Program and Eastern Mennonite College Nursing Program in Harrisonburg, VA. She was employed as a registered nurse at Grace Hospital and then Hutchinson Hospital. Vera was a member of Center Amish Mennonite Church, Hutchinson.

She is survived by her sister, Barbara (David) Miller, South Hutchinson; brothers: William (Elizabeth) Nisly, Hutchinson; Harley Nisly, Hutchinson; Lester (Edna) Nisly, SC; Larry (Barbara) Nisly, Hutchinson; John (Sara Mae) Nisly, Hutchinson; sisters-in-law: Iva Nisly and

Cora Nisly; brother-in-law, Paul Nisly; 42 nieces and nephews; 164 great-nieces and great-nephews; and 30 great-great nieces and great-great nephews.

Vera was preceded in death by her parents; brothers: Daniel and Elmer; sister, Laura Nisly; two nieces and nephews; and three great-nieces and great-nephews.

The funeral service was held Sunday, August 4, 2019, at Center Amish Mennonite Church with Dwight Miller, Dwight Nisly, Don Miller, and Brad Nisly officiating. Burial followed in West Center Cemetery, Hutchinson.

Yoder, Fannie Mae, 88, of Staunton, VA, died peacefully at Mountain View Nursing Home, Aroda, VA, on October 26, 2019. She was born August 15, 1931, in Hutchinson, KS, to the late Ben and Mary Yoder.


Fannie Mae moved with her family from Garnett, KS, to Stuarts Draft, VA, in 1946. She was an active member of Pilgrim Christian Fellowship, Stuarts Draft, VA. She enjoyed music, art, gardening, reading, and writing.

Fannie Mae received her RN degree from Eastern Mennonite College and Riverside Hospital in 1964 and was then employed by Riverside Hospital

and Mountain View Nursing Home. She spent much of her adult life in service and mission assignments in the States, Newfoundland, Belize, and Paraguay. She served as a nurse-midwife, delivering over 200 babies. She was also instrumental in helping Nina, an abandoned special needs child, be brought from Paraguay to the States for care, whom she later adopted.

Survivors include a daughter, Nina Ruth Yoder, a sister, Magdalena Schrock (Alvin), Cumberland; a sister-in-law, Ruth Yoder, Floyd, VA; two brothers: Harvey Yoder (Alma Jean), Harrisonburg; Sanford Yoder (Martha), La Merced, Costa Rica; and many beloved nieces and nephews.

In addition to her parents, she was preceded in death by sisters: Mary Beth (Harlan) Shifflett, Free Union; Lovina (Ernest) Yoder, Rustburg; Esther (Robert) Yoder, Long Island; Lucy (Alvin) Schrock, Staunton; and one brother, Eli Yoder, Floyd, VA.

The funeral service was held on October 29, 2019, at Pilgrim Christian Fellowship, officiated by Ken Miller, Leon Yoder, Bennie Byler, and Simon Schrock. Burial was at the Mount Zion Cemetery, Stuarts Draft, VA, with David Schrock serving. 

CHRIST'S FRIENDSHIP PREVAILS
when human friendship fails.

According to statistics quoted by Peter Mommsen in his article titled “In Search of a City” in the Winter 2020 issue of *Plough Quarterly*, in 1800, seven percent of the world’s population lived in cities. One hundred years later the percentage had grown to 16%. Today it is 55% and if current trends continue, by 2050 it is expected to reach 68%.

There seems to be a growing interest in urban missions and ministries among conservative Anabaptist people. The statistics cited above remind us that if we are interested in the plight and the need of humanity, it is appropriate that some of us are drawn to urban settings.

Serving others in the name of Jesus Christ is both immensely fulfilling and also fraught with perils. After all, we often think of ministry consisting of a person sharing what he or she has with someone who doesn’t. This obviously can include material goods as well as spiritual and other relational resources. While part of that is appropriate, this mindset can develop into an unhealthy dynamic in which the roles of giver and recipient don’t move back and forth as much

as they should. It’s appropriate for anybody in ministry to seek ways to receive and depend on others, rather than always being in the position of dispensing the benefit.

Often those who move into new areas of ministry and service, in their desire to serve and bless others, begin by asking something like this, “What is it that you need?” A better way of promoting a proper understanding of ministry is to begin with the question of “What do you have?” These questions were voiced in a recent conversation and are not original with me, and I’m not sure where they originated. I’m reminded of God’s question to Moses at the burning bush where Moses got his difficult assignment. God asked Moses what he had in his hand. That instrument was pivotal in the days to come. Wouldn’t we agree that the long-term success of a variety of ministries finds ways to build solid connections to accessible resources rather than the indefinite infusion of outside resources?

The following is quoted from Mr. Mommsen’s article: “A long-term resident of a minority neighborhood told me of a group of middle-class

white twenty-somethings who discerned a calling to move in to practice a ‘ministry of presence.’ ‘Actually,’ he commented, ‘Jesus has been present here all along, way before they arrived.’ He appreciated the newcomers’ desire for radical discipleship, but reckoned they’d eventually see that they were less likely to catalyze mission than to receive it.”

I’m familiar with a city mission in a foreign country not too far from here. Currently there is a small church where the resident folks and the ministry personnel worship together. Living in the slums has its challenges. But where challenges abound opportunities rise proportionately. People are needed to build the church and also to be involved in the community in a variety of encouragement ministries. Godly examples in solid family relationships, in faithful Christian living, economic responsibility, work ethic, friendship, profitable channeling of youthful energy, avoiding vices, and many other things are in distressingly short supply. If you’d like an opportunity to learn from others who have a different perspective than yours and also to bless others who haven’t been blessed as you have, maybe this is for you. Please feel free to contact me.

I’d be delighted to put you in touch with someone to help you learn more about this opportunity. You wouldn’t even need to learn a foreign language to get started. I’m talking about the Haynes Street mission in Belize City, Belize, operated by Amish Mennonite Aid.



In December of this past year an eight-person delegation of Amish men from Pennsylvania, Ohio, and

Indiana visited President Trump in the Oval Office at the White House. This visit was widely reported in the media. The Amish are not very politically involved as a whole, which added to the unusual nature of this visit. Those who visited reported a warm reception from the President. They were enthused about the healthy economy and appreciate some of Trump’s declared priorities. They see Trump as valuing hard work, promoting business, and protecting religious freedoms, among other things. They marveled at how down-to-earth he was in this face-to-face meeting.

I find it interesting that Trump thought it was worth his time to carve out some space for these visitors. I do not believe that a high percentage of Amish will vote. However, the states with the highest Amish populations also are key states in the upcoming

presidential election. If the voting margins are close, mobilizing a few Amish folks to vote could wield an out-sized influence. Those who care about those things pay attention to these little details. I'm guessing that most of the Amish don't have Twitter. I don't either, but his tweets often find their way into other print media. I'm also guessing that if the Amish would get to know Trump through his Twitter communication, they might learn they don't have as much in common with him as they thought.

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Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever (RMSF) is a tick-borne disease. If treated early, the long-term prognosis is quite favorable. But the symptoms parallel those of other illnesses which makes early diagnosis challenging. The later the diagnosis, the more problematic the prognosis becomes. More than 60% of the cases reported in the USA in 2010, which is the most recent statistics I found, are from the states of Delaware, North Carolina, Tennessee, Missouri, Oklahoma and Arkansas. The highest concentrations of RMSF diagnosis indicated an incidence of more than 30 persons per 1,000,000 inhabitants. In the last months, three local, personal acquaintances of our family were diagnosed with this condition. Our home county of Labette County,

Kansas, has a population of less than 25,000. I have no way of knowing if others in this area have also been diagnosed or not. But this anecdotal observation indicates that the incidence is on the high side of average in this nation. Non-confinement ground-feeding fowl, like chickens and guineas, eat a lot of ticks and help reduce infestations when given the opportunity.

• • • • •

A local brother commented that recently he had discussed with one of his friends the idea of acquiring a certain item. Shortly thereafter, he began noticing ads for that item showing up on his smart phone. He marveled at the coincidence. Is it a coincidence? Actually, probably not.

Smart phones that respond to voice commands are often astonishingly accurate at recording the conversations that occur. Curated advertisement, based on recognized conversation, is actually pretty common. The idea that this occurs based on internet browser activity is widely understood, but this targeting of advertisement based on voice recognition feels more insidious. I'm not prepared to offer a tutorial on how to modify the settings on your phone in order to minimize this occurrence, but some of you will be interested in finding out.

• • • • •

Around our living room on Christmas Day, those who had gathered were discussing the manners and customs of Christmas observances near and far. One of our guests, who grew up in a home with television, made some interesting comments related to gift-giving. He said that our children have an enormous advantage because they have not been exposed to the onslaught of advertisements via television reminding them of all the things they need to make them happy. His observation is that gifts tend to be much more appreciated by children who have not had their senses bombarded and shaped by these advertising efforts.

This brother is also one who carefully adjusts his electronic

media settings to minimize targeted advertising. We're more vulnerable to marketing pressure that aligns with our interests. He recognizes that he has enough incentive to buy due to his personal interest without external sources reminding him of his need. He's a wise man.

• • • • •

I always appreciate when people reach out and offer feedback and input for this column. Thank you! I recently got a piece of mail providing some feedback. This communication came without a return address and was not signed. *Calvary Messenger's* policy is that we won't respond in print to communication that is not signed. Of course, there is no way to respond privately either. Thank you for your input and for understanding.

-RJM 

Eye Contact

John R. Perfect

I stood in a New York City subway station, leaning against a railing. Behind me, yellow caution tape spanned the hallway, blocking off the L train platform. Beside me on the wall, a poster explained how people in Brooklyn could work around the problems created by platform closure

and the disruptive L train track work.

An MTA worker equipped with a megaphone and vibrant vest stood at the intersection of corridors, declaring a message to the seekers of the L train. "Manhattan bound L train: Take the free shuttle buses at the station entrance. Canarsie bound

L stopping at the J platform: down the stairs to your left.”

She repeated this with consistency, ease, and a casualness, almost as if she was born to do it.

I watched as a woman walked up the corridor and stopped, a literal two feet from the megaphone. She looked as though she was contemplating seriously her ability to complete her journey now that the yellow tape had defeated her.

Beside her the megaphone blared, announcing a simple solution to her halted state. Once. Twice. Still she stood. Then she glanced at me. We locked eyes. In that moment I realized she saw me as a possible source of information, as I leaned there not looking lost.

We held eye contact for a couple of beats; then I deliberately shifted my gaze two feet to the left and stared at the megaphone. It blasted a third rendition in her ear: “Manhattan bound L train: Take the free shuttle buses at the station entrance. Canarsie bound L stopping at the J platform: down the stairs to your left.”

Her face lit up, and she marched

down the stairs at her left which she now knew were her path toward fulfilling her destiny. Or it would at least get her to Canarsie.

As she disappeared, I thought about what had just happened. Romans 1:20 says that God, including His invisible attributes, is clearly evident in the things He created. Psalm 19:1 says the heavens and sky proclaim God’s glory and handiwork. When we think of the sun, moon, and stars glorifying God in constant praise, or the streaming colors of a sunset announcing His greatness, we can begin to feel small, quiet, and unnoticeable.

Even with the megaphone God has given His creation to shout His glory, no sky will ever sing of salvation. No star can share the Gospel. We alone are granted that great privilege. Only we get to share the good news of Jesus Christ.

All around megaphones blast. But many people don’t notice. Sometimes, what people need is eye contact.

[Reprinted from Life Lines, November-December 2019. Used by permission.]



Christian fellowship simply means AN OPENING OF CHRISTIAN HEARTS.

De Serve

Lyle Musser

There has been a concept on my mind for many months, but I was having a difficult time putting it into words. I have random papers scattered here and there with possible ways to express this idea. However, two recent situations gelled this thought in my mind very clearly. The first situation involves a discussion in a meeting with a nonprofit organization. The organization is growing rapidly and is trying to fill its need for more staff. The question discussed was “should we compensate our staff at the lower end of the range paid for similar work in the secular market place; thus, requiring sacrifice to work for a nonprofit and encouraging a sense of ministry?” Anyone who has served with a nonprofit ministry as staff or board member understands the reality of this question. The natural critic in me only saw two words in the question. How do you *require sacrifice*? Furthermore, if sacrifice is required, is it really a sacrifice? When Jesus said to his disciples, “follow me,” He did not coerce them into the required sacrifice. The choice was up to them. In one sense, sacrifice is required because there is no way to follow Christ without it. On the other

hand, sacrifice is a choice because the individual makes a willing choice to give up what he could obtain otherwise.

The second situation that made this very evident was a random thought I had one day. I came to the table and asked my family what parts make up the word *deserve*. One of my school children immediately responded and said that *de* means “away from” and, therefore, *deserve* means “**away from serving**.” Thanks to the spelling through morphographs curriculum, my child had an immediate grasp on this concept. It can be stated simply thus: the more I *deserve*, the less I can serve. The higher I set my *deserve* level, the more I flee from serving. The more I *deserve*, the more I *de serve*. If my *deserve* level follows my income (which it naturally does), I will always find more things, more pleasures, more entertainment, more vacations, and more whatever to fulfill my desires. Unfortunately, *deserve* is warped by our sinful human nature, so that too many people are chasing things they think they *deserve* in a frantic race of vanity. Their level of *deserve* is never fulfilled, and it propels a futile race for satisfaction which is never found.

The related danger in this concept is percentage-based thinking. Men may be hailed as great givers because they give away 20%, 30%, maybe even 50% or 80% of their income. However, that percentage of their income says nothing about their level of deserve. Even if they are giving 80% of their income, they still need to answer to God for the level of deserve spent on self. The problem with percentage-based thinking is that God never asked for a percentage of our commitment or our sacrifice. He asked for 100% or nothing. Until we understand these percentages, none of us will ever get the level of deserve correct in our lives. We will always over-inflate the things we think we need, want, desire, and deserve. We will always devalue and minimize and shirk our responsibility towards service if we don't see God as the 100% giver of all the good things that He has given to us for serving. Think about it this way: the more time I need for myself to fill my needs, the less time I have to serve others. The thousands of dollars spent on recreation, entertainment, and big boy toys are never available for service in other ways. Our human nature sets up life in such a way that we put ourselves first, and without thinking about it, we *de serve*.

During my ministry, I have served in various roles and interacted with

many different groups of people. By far, the most inspiring group is not the group who feels like they deserve a certain level of lifestyle, a certain level of income, or a certain expectation toward life. The most inspired and inspiring group is those who have willingly chosen to sacrifice. They have put service first, without regard to what they deserve. They need God to work on their behalf to accomplish His ministry through them. And therefore, they come to understand a greater joy, reliance, trust, and faith than those who chase down the things they deserve first and then try to serve God second.

Our current economic situation in America causes all of us to over-inflate our own level of deserve. We think we deserve a whole lot more than what we do. In many ways, we have lost the meaning of sacrifice. In many ways we have found ways to have our cake and eat it too. The level of deserve plays itself out in many areas of life. Each of us faces our own challenges concerning the things we think we deserve, want, and need. May we all put forth a conscious effort to follow our Master's example to serve rather than de serve.

[Reprinted from the KMF Messenger, Jan.-Feb. 2020 issue. Used by permission.]



Georgia

*[Excerpts from the Windows of the World,
published by Grace Press. –Floyd Stoltzfus.]*

Georgia is one of those little known places on the globe. It is situated south of Russia and east of the Black Sea. Georgia is an exceptional country with exceptional people. One reason why Georgians think they are exceptional is that they fought off Islamic armies during much of their history. Since A.D. 337, when the whole country was forcibly baptized, they have remained one of the very few “Christian” nations in the region. They faithfully protect the grave of Matthias, the apostle ordained in the place of Judas Iscariot. It is reported that thousands of Georgians were beheaded because they would not convert to Islam.

Georgia is exceptional because of race and language. The people do not fit into any main category of Europe or Asia, nor is their language related to other major languages. The use of Georgian as a native tongue is almost exclusive to the 3.7 million inhabitants of the country. History indicates that its flowing script may have been developed especially for translating the Bible into the

Georgian language. The Georgian Bible was translated in the fourth century, and until recent years, has seldom been updated.

Georgia is exceptional because of its own brand of Christianity—Georgian Orthodox with a “heaven of heavens” just for the Georgians. Yet Orthodox Georgians are neither to read the Bible nor question their religion. They must simply believe that “your fathers were orthodox, and your children will be.”

Georgia is exceptional for its hospitality. It is almost one of the Ten Commandments that the guest must be treated as if he comes from God. Hospitality is therefore a sacred and joyous responsibility.

How did Grace Press get Involved in Georgia?

by Arland Eberly

Grace Press sent a box of literature to a pastor, and he responded with a request for thousands of books on subjects such as divorce, television, and modest dress. This request warranted a visit. We arrived on a Christmas Day in very damp weather

with a freezing temperature. In our visit to the church we found an overworked pastor and some ill-prepared junior leaders. This was a fractured church with a declining membership.

The first visit included preaching, translated into Russian and then into Georgian, followed by question-answer periods lasting until 1:00 A.M. The questions revolved around the evidence of the Holy Spirit, when to baptize a new believer, and how to train children.

Grace Press is a publisher and does not intend to plant churches. But when the work of publishing yields fruit in the form of a request for teaching in a Bible conference, what do we do? For Biblical accountability, Grace Press feels responsible to pass requests on to individual congregations or to brethren supported by churches. A congregation from north-central United States consented to take on the work in Georgia while Grace Press continues to provide literature and to help with logistics as needed.

On succeeding visits to Georgia, conferences were held, focused on the home, holiness of life, and the organization of the church, along with basic Bible doctrines. While there we stayed with Georgian families. Showing our photo albums from Anabaptist background churches played a large part in our testimony.

In the early days of the conferences, discussion periods were longer than the sermons. People hung over the benches to ask questions and to hear answers, and even elderly grandmothers wrote copious notes in flowery Georgian script.

Meanwhile, Georgian-language books from Grace Press are going into the hands of many people: Orthodox, Baptist, Pentecostal, charismatic, and evangelical. Georgia is a unique country with a very restricted language. This means that for most denominations, translating and printing their material into Georgian is an unpopular choice. Yet literacy is said to be one hundred percent. This creates a dearth of literature, making it more likely that people will read whatever is given them. The literature that goes out is seed which will surely return to God with fruit.

Reactions do arise against the preaching of the gospel. This becomes especially complicated in disrupted churches where there is no established membership, where no one really knows who is a member or who is not. There has been a request for Mennonites to settle in Georgia to be living examples of Biblical faith and practice.

[Used by permission: Grace Press News, June 2019]



Acts in Africa, 2019

Martha Esh, Kisumu, Kenya



In the last issue we explored what it means to “breathe prayer.” Soon after writing that article, the following story took place and came to my attention. I knew that retelling this story for a larger audience could illustrate a model of prayer, but mostly bring glory to our Almighty God. It also impresses us with the need to pray for those on the frontlines. The following story was told to me by Martha Esh, wife of Steve, presently serving as AMA missionaries in Kisumu, Kenya. “Acts of the Apostles” still happen today. Susan Schlabach

This forenoon I went to the plant vendors close to the “chip shack” located a mile from our compound. At this particular place they have plants all around the block, and different people are there taking care of the plants and selling them.

I was getting the plants together that I needed, and two vendors went half way around the block with me looking for more. There were the usual vehicles, piki pikis, and people passing by, and I was paying no attention to what was happening on the road beside us. As I approached the side where my vehicle was parked, intent on winding up my plant business, I saw it—just as one of the vendors gasped, “They are locking up your vehicle!” I had been there for something like thirty minutes; but what was this?

Before I parked, a plant vendor told

me where to park because he said it would not be good if I parked with the van on the edge of the road, so this was completely off the road on the dirt close to the plants. And the drama began.

A double cab truck was parked right beside my van. One man had one of those big yellow wheel lock things in his hand. Another already locked one back wheel. But why were there so *many* men? This was not normal! The men swarmed around. Some were in uniforms, others not, but all were very much in charge.

The leader in a navy uniform informed me quickly that I had broken the law which was a very bad mistake. My first offense was that I had parked at a place where they don't allow parking, and secondly, I had not paid for parking. I was almost speechless at this absurdity! We never paid for parking in the

back streets. I told him that I think this is corruption but quickly realized that I better not say anything like that again. He only got louder and in my face.

I told them that we lived in Kisumu and have been here for some years and have never needed to pay parking on this back street where there are not even parking spaces. He said, "Oh yes, maybe you've never paid here before, but the laws have now changed. And how are we going to support our town if people are refusing to pay?"

Another leader was getting a bit loud and telling me I need to pay with M-Pesa. I told him I don't have that on my phone. More were chiming in that I need to dial *88 and on and on. Several were talking at one time, but it all pointed to one thing. They were pressing for a bribe.

Somehow, I had a feeling I should not get my phone out or open my purse. I usually hold my hand over my purse when among lots of people. By now the crowd had grown and I glanced behind me to see that I was totally encircled with men, two layers deep. My heart fluttered a bit. They became louder and totally unreasonable. I finally told them I had nothing to say. One said, "Ok, if you have nothing to say, we will take this vehicle to town, and then you will pay all those charges plus the charges for the violations here."

I asked them if I should call the elders of the compound to come and assist us? "Yes! Yes! You just call them

to come! We want them here for this violation of their vehicle." Their quick response made me think that would not be a good idea.

Somehow, I still wasn't quite ready to open my purse and get my phone out in the middle of that crowd. They did give me about three feet on the inside of the circle and thankfully didn't come closer. I never feared for my life, or I would have called Steve right away.

They kept insisting, "So you need to just give us something! We need something!" But I knew I could not give them a bribe.

I finally saw that this was one time they were not going to back down. A few of them were in a mocking mood and egging each other on. The plant vendors on the outside of the circle did not say a word. Approximately fifteen to twenty men surrounded me.

I was at a total loss to know what the best thing would be to do, so I told them I needed to pray. I didn't care who was there, nor what they thought, but suddenly I knew I had to pray NOW! I don't remember what all I said, and some kept on talking in the background. A few were saying something about church. I kept on praying and asking God to please show me what to do.

After the prayer, it happened faster than I could process it all. Immediately, the uniformed man in charge came to shake my hand and said that he is dismissing the charges, all the while hurrying to remove the wheel locks. He said, "You have


prayed a blessing for us.” The other mouthy leader shook my hand and thanked me for the blessing. I was dazed and didn’t remember praying a blessing on them.

In a matter of seconds, they all packed into the truck. Some may have gotten onto the back, I barely remember. So quickly they were gone. Just gone. I felt like the woman left standing when Jesus said, “Neither do I condemn thee, go and sin no more.”

The plant vendors started in right away, “This is the habit of the government in Kenya...corruption and money!” I stood there shocked and numb. I repeated, “Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord! God is so good!” They repeated it after me.

We still had to load a few plants from the other side of the block; the vendors walked alongside as I drove. Before leaving, I told the vendor on the opposite side of the block that something had just happened, and the others could tell him about it. One said, “We will tell him! We have just seen the goodness of God!”

At home, between sobs, I tried to tell Steve and Julie about the morning’s encounter. I was traumatized, yet humbled that God used a prayer I couldn’t even remember to turn the hearts of those men. I had just witnessed a miracle.

We ask people to pray for us. This story is the result of your prayers. Thank you, everyone, for praying for us. Please continue. 

junior messages

Country Roads in Paraguay

Mary Ellen Beachy, Dundee, OH

Missionaries do a lot of ordinary things. They run errands and spend hours of time on the road. Things are different from their homeland. Cultural practices can be hard to fathom. It is good to keep in mind that the flexible will not be bent out of shape.

Here, my nephew, Sanford, shares about airport runs and visitors in Paraguay.

It is normally a bumpy, long journey and a test of patience to travel from the airport in Asuncion to our home in La Belleza, back in the hills of Paraguay.

An older couple, Menno and Nona, came to visit Kevin and Becca. Visitors encouraged and blessed us when they were willing to roll up their sleeves and work and took an

interest in our lives and the lives of the nationals. Often though, it was a challenge to get them back to our place from the airport.

As we drove away from the airport that evening, I eyed the dark sky and falling rain. I hoped to drive out of the storm. After two hours of driving I thought I might be ahead of the storm, but it seemed to be following us.

Soon after we came to the dirt road that took us toward our home, there was a road block where a group was protesting against the government. Large sticks and small logs were on the road. The discontents sat on them and watched the traffic pile up for miles. Like work shifts, they took turns sitting on their logs. The police were very present and helped maintain order. These demonstrations can go on for a whole day.

As we sat there waiting, I couldn't help wondering what would happen if an ambulance came along. I didn't have to wonder long as very shortly one came with its lights flashing. Much to my amazement the protesters got off their seats, pulled the logs out of the way, and the ambulance went through. I was disappointed to see them promptly close the road again. James says, "Blessed is the man that endureth temptations." I

had installed some flashers in our van for the occasions we use it as an ambulance. I was tempted to get one of our nurses on the floor faking being sick while another one hovered over her doing CPR. I could turn on the flashers, blow the horn, and see if they would let us through too. I ended up enduring the temptation, and according to the Bible I was blessed.

I got out and spoke with farmers beside the road. They kindly let us detour through their fields and we were on our way. I was relieved. I suppose Menno and Nona were too. Likely they were praying fervently in the back seat. I was breathing prayers as I drove. We got lost for a while but then got back on track. In the meantime, the dark clouds were rolling in and raindrops were coming down. I sped along the dirt road hoping to arrive home before it got too slippery.

We rounded a curve going down through a deep ravine and encountered a truck that wasn't able to make it up the hill. Our vehicle took shelter in front of the stopped truck while two cowboys came sliding along, frantically trying to control a large, mad bull tied to a rope. The bull would have been glad to run over us. The mud slowed the beast down too.

Once the rodeo passed, we inched past the stopped truck with our vehicle; a deep ditch was on one side and about a half inch kept us from scraping the truck on the other side.

At the bottom of the ravine we encountered a stranded taxi that was hopelessly stuck. In the taxi was a lady passenger on her way home from an extended hospital stay. We rearranged our luggage and passengers and kindly took her with us.

It was really raining by this time. With prayers and speed, I hit the gas and went spinning up and out of the ravine. The roads were wet and slippery like snow by this time.

Praise the Lord we arrived home safely. It took about an hour and a half longer than normal. The rain drummed loudly on our roof. We did not mind, for we were at home. Thanks be to God; His angels saw us through.


In December we welcomed another staff member. Mary Heather Bennet joined the nursing team and trained to be a midwife back in the hills and jungles of La Belleza. We are glad for her experience, since we are quite behind the modern hospital facilities in the States.

We opened our guest house to a British family from the States. They

wanted to stay close to the clinic till their baby was born. They have four children and were divinely led to Paraguay to minister the gospel. They are very much a “live by faith, one day at a time” type of people. Their vehicle broke down on the way to our clinic, and it was about 3:30 a.m. until they arrived at our guest house. When I handed the mom a tray of food she immediately burst out in a prayer of thanksgiving. They attend our services quite regularly and help break up our formalism.

I observed their friendliness. They shook hands with many people after church, exclaimed over trivial things, and sincerely asked how they were doing. They challenge me.

If they discover any kind of need or sickness, they will immediately pray for the need on the spot. I have been amazed at their well-behaved children. When they ask them to do something in a normal tone of voice, they are obedient and respectful. I never hear them beg after the parents inform them of the final decision.

I am reminded that there are always things to learn from other people. Each day brings unique challenges. Life is never boring in La Belleza. Airport runs, taking care of the sick, and entertaining visitors is all a part of work for Jesus. 

On Spectacles

Shawn Miller, West Lafayette, OH

On September 9, 2006, a powerful movie was released combining Christianity and the sports world. This movie left some Christians amazed at the wonderful works of God portrayed in the movie while other Christians were left shaking their heads and puzzling how God, Christianity, and faith could be incorporated into something that seemed a far cry from anything religious, namely, sports.

The Kendrick brothers, who are the writers, producers, and directors of the movie, are associate pastors of Sherwood Baptist Church in Albany, GA. Michael Catt, the lead pastor of the church where the Kendrick brothers attend, and the executive producer of the movie, states that the movie was filmed out of the pure joy of serving God (CBN, 2019). The movie was entitled “*Facing the Giants*.” It depicts a football coach who has never led his team to the winning season in the past six years. Outside of his football career his general life isn’t going very well either. That is when he begins to cry

out to God, and through a series of events he leads his football team to a deeper understanding of faith in God. In the end they triumph as the champion football team. The basic moral of the story is that God is greater than our greatest giants and can help us overcome.

The movie intertwines sports and biblical principles into an intriguing blend. Christian Broadcasting Network (CBN news) states, “The Kendrick brothers made this film to spread the message of faith in Jesus Christ and the positive impact we can have on others. Strong Christian themes are in abundance, and many scenes contain explicit references to the Bible. Coach Taylor even uses verses from Nehemiah about building a wall to motivate his defensive line to stonewall their opponents on the field” (2019, p.1)

Despite the movie’s emotional appeal to a large Christian audience, one should be left wondering if Christianity, faith, God, and sports should be able to mesh into a wonderful story of Christian victory leading to a football championship.

However, research shows that “most Americans are comfortable with a mash-up of their faith and their sports” (Barna Group, 2013, p.1).

I would contend that true Kingdom Christians will have a vastly different approach to professional sports. The historic church of the first three centuries was careful to warn against Christians attending sporting events. In an article entitled *On Spectacles*, Tertullian (155-240 A.D.) articulated why Christians should not attend sporting events. The Romans were consumed with sporting events as displayed in their arenas. Tertullian blasted these forms of entertainment as ungodly. He states, “The pomp of the circus, whatever its nature, offends God” (Ch. 7).

I believe there are many reasons why Christians today should exercise great care in relation to professional sports. Four main reasons are explored in this article as arguments to protect and defend Christians against involvement in the sports world.

The Money Factor

It is shocking to discover how much money is poured into sports in the United States alone. According to the LA Times (2018) the average National Football League (NFL) player makes about 2.7 million dollars per season. This is less than

professional basketball and baseball players who average 7.1 million and 4 million dollars respectively. There are 32 NFL football teams in the United States with each team usually consisting of 53 players. Some quick math reveals that approximately 4.58 billion dollars are paid out just in salaries to NFL football players within the United States. On top of the salary, the stadiums themselves cost millions of dollars. Take the Cleveland Brown’s stadium for an example (Yes, I live in Ohio). The stadium was completed in 1999 with a grand total cost of \$283 million. In 2013, renovations began taking place, lasting for two years and costing another \$120 million (First Energy Stadium, 2019). The millions of dollars invested into one stadium is multiplied many times over throughout the United States to include all the football and baseball stadiums as well as venues for the other professional sports.

Spectators also spend extravagant amounts on attending sporting events. According to the Consumer News and Business Channel (CNBC, 2017), consumers spent about \$56 billion dollars to attend sporting events in 2017. Consumers also spent about \$33 billion on athletic equipment and \$19 billion on gym memberships totaling approximately \$100 billion dollars on sports-related

purchases in a 12-month period.

Your mind might be spinning with these statistics by now. It should definitely make Christians scratch their heads in wonder at such extravagant spending on corruptible glory. There are varying statistics on how much money is needed each year to alleviate world hunger. The most consistent statistic by the United Nations states that \$30 billion a year would resolve the problem of world hunger. (LA Times, 2008). It is a sad reality to think that consumers in the United States spend over three times the amount in sports per year needed to alleviate world hunger. Kingdom Christians will clearly see the erroneous use of money in the sports realm.

The Time Factor

The Bible gives instructions about using our time wisely. Ephesians 5:15-16 says, “Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil” (ESV). It is important to use our time wisely for the Kingdom of God. It is staggering to think about how much time Americans spend watching sports. According to one source, in 2018, the big four broadcasting networks, ESPN, ESPN2, Fox Sports 1, and NBC Sports networks racked up a mind-boggling one trillion minutes

by sports viewers. Put into years, this comes out to 1,902,587 years. In February 2018, when NBC aired both the Super Bowl and 18 days of Winter Olympics programming, the network racked up 113.8 billion minutes of sports consumption—more than 4 billion minutes *per day*” (Hollywood Reporter, 2019, p.1).

These statistics seem to be in direct contradiction to the Scripture’s command of making the best use of time. This should be alarming to Christians who are serious about their devotion to God. These things can quickly take time away from things with eternal values to things of temporal values.

The Glory Factor

Isaiah 42:8 says, “I am the Lord; that is my name; my glory I give to no other, nor my praise to carved idols.” Also, in Isaiah 48:11b, it states, “For how should my name be profaned? My glory I will not give to another.” God is very jealous about His glory. He, as the Creator of the universe, deserves the utmost glory. There should no place be given to any other. In the sports realm, players are highly praised and glorified for their athletic abilities. How it must sadden God’s heart to see His incorruptible glory being less adored than the corruptible glory of sports figures! It can easily be labeled as idolatry.

In his article *On Spectacles*, Tertullian's main argument against attending the arenas was the idolatry involved. Rather than worshipping God and giving Him glory, people were worshipping the actors and sports figures in the arenas. Tertullian states that the charge of idolatry itself should be enough reason for giving up the spectacles (Ch. 14).

It is probably safe to say that there is very little to no thought of God at sporting events. Tertullian writes a humorous paragraph in satirical form concerning this. "Will the man, seated where there is nothing of God, at that moment think of God? But, while the tragic actor is ranting, our good friend will probably recall the outcries of some prophet! Amid the strains of the effeminate flute-player, he will no doubt meditate on a psalm! And while the athletes are engaged in combat, he is sure to say that a blow must not be struck in return for a blow!" (Ch. 15). A Kingdom Christian should be very concerned about giving glory to God alone in thought, word, and deed.

The Abomination Factor

All Christians should have a desire to love the things God loves and hate the things God hates. Sometimes, however, our views of what God loves and what He hates get skewed in the midst of worldly blindness. There is an

excellent litmus test given by Jesus to distinguish the things loved or hated by God. This is found in Luke 16:15b where it says, "For what is highly exalted among men is an abomination to God" (ESV). This gives us a good foundation to decipher what is an abomination to God.

The sports world is definitely something that is highly exalted among men. TV channels and newspapers are filled with the latest games and plays. For those who have watched a professional game for even a brief period, it does not take long to see the frenzy of the crowd, exalting their team or favorite player. In a moment of excitement, the crowds will rise to their feet shouting, applauding, and exalting an event. Tertullian jabs at the blindness of it all by saying, "Everyone tells everybody else what all of them have seen just that moment. This I take as a proof of their blindness" (Ch. 15). What do the spectators gain in all of this? They are no longer their own masters. At best, they lose their own self-control (Ch. 16). This no doubt is an abomination to God who loves to bestow tranquility, gentleness, and peace of mind to those who trust in Him. He is tender and sensitive and does not want us to vex Him by frenzy, anger, bitterness of feeling, or grief, which can all be caused by a mere game (paraphrased from Tertullian, Ch. 15).

Conclusion

This article is not a comprehensive study of this important topic. It was written with professional sports in mind but could also include little leagues as well. Other interesting things to discuss would include how much a Christian should follow sports in the newspapers. Many Anabaptist people, who would not dare to go to a stadium to take in a game, readily follow the sports news in their local papers or on their electronic devices. This can also be dangerous. Beer advertisements and immoral life styles often go hand in hand with sports and should act as warning signs to Christians who are intrigued by this realm. Ultimately, our goal as Christians is to please God with our whole life including our thought patterns, conversations, and conduct. All these should be conducive to obtaining an incorruptible crown, by giving glory to an incorruptible God, not corruptible man.

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Prayer is a time of exposure of the soul to God.

• • • • •

Your obedience to God today determines what you'll be for God tomorrow.

• • • • •

When Christ is the center of your focus,
all else will come into proper perspective.

• • • • •

Christ's incarnation brought the infinite God within reach of finite men.

• • • • •

God's communication to man has come through the Christ of the cross.

• • • • •

A smile is a powerful weapon; you can break ice with it.

• • • • •

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• • • • •

Three grand essentials to happiness are something to do,
something to love, something to hope for.

• • • • •

What have you done today that nobody but a Christian would do?