



Calvary MESSENGER

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

Galatians 6:14

NOVEMBER 2022

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Calvary Messenger

November 2022

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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The ABCs of Life

Ernest E. Lee, Grottoes, VA

- A- Are my **attitudes** what God wants?
B- Do I run my **business** God's way?
C- Do I **care** for the church and others like I should?
D- Am I **donating** my time and money like it is written?
E- Am I **earnestly** praying for the church?
F- May I hold God the **Father** in holy reverence.
G- Do I seek the **good** in others?
H- Do I strive to make others **happy**?
I- Do I think more of myself than I should?
J- **Jesus** is my Savior and my God!
K- **Kindness** is the key to happiness.
L- May **longsuffering** grace our lives.
M- May I **magnify** the name of the Lord my God!
N- Jesus said He will **never** leave us or forsake us.
O- Am I striving to **obey** God's Word?
P- In controversial times, am I a **peacemaker**?
Q- The forgiving soul has blessed **quietness**.
R- Our **righteousness** comes through Jesus.
S- **Singing** is a great way to praise God.
T- I should bring all my **thoughts** into the captivity of Jesus.
U- May I always be **understanding** of others.
V- May I always pay my **vows**!
W- Let us praise the **wonderful** name of Jesus!
X- I should be **excited** to serve the Lord!
Y- Am I **yearning** for the second coming of Christ?
Z- Help me to sing the songs of **Zion**! 

Lessons from the Cattle

[This article is a sequel to the September editorial, "A Parable of the Cattle." While these happenings are not written in parable form, they do take place in the same location, the land of the south, Colony Luz y Esperanza in Paraguay. My wife and I spent four years working as administrators for Amish Mennonite Aid at the Luz y Esperanza clinic at the same place. We followed the elder steward and his wife, Simon and Elsie Schrock, from Grantsville, MD. This was during the time that Ronald Reagan was president of the United States.]

There was a beef herd on the clinic property, consisting of around 50 head of Polled Hereford and Brahma cattle with a mix of both. While some of the old Polled Hereford brood cows did not have any horns, it was normal for the cattle in Paraguay to have horns. For some reason, one half-grown steer broke off one of his horns. The stub continued to bleed, so we called in our local church brother who was an excellent self-taught veterinarian. He proposed to remove the broken stump. When the steer finally made his reappearance

with the herd, he had quite a row to tangle with. All the other steers his size and younger had to see if maybe they were a bit stronger than before he lost his horn. One would go for a little pushing contest and then another would take his turn. Even some of the very small calves, only several months old, came and butted heads with this wounded older brother. Isn't this a very common tendency in mankind as well, to see if we have gained the upper hand? May we never be guilty of taking advantage of a wounded (or unwounded) brother or sister.

The pasture land was divided into five-to-six acre plots for controlled grazing. All of these smaller fields had gates that opened into a common cattle lane that led to the corral and water trough. In the middle of this cattle lane was a wooded area so the cattle could find shelter from the sun in the warm seasons. When the cattle had grazed for several days, they would become impatient to be moved to a fresh pasture with better grazing. It was at such a time when Jezebel, in the previous editorial, tried to push her way through a gate

and died when the gate fell on her.

One of the brood cows, named Alta because of her tall horns, discovered a way to come and go as she pleased. She would find the center of the fence between two posts, get down on her knees, stick her horns under the smooth high-tensile fence wire, and push forward and upward. She was a strong animal, and even with a new fence that was stretched very tightly, she could almost always get out. Now, she didn't break out only when the pasture was poor. She just liked to get into a field where the others weren't. But if we moved the cattle out of the field she had just left, she would crawl back under the fence so she could go with the herd. Sometimes it was to be put into the field she had broken into and left again. There were also times when she broke back into the field that the herd had just been grazing. Grass was always greener on the other side of the fence for Alta. (I suppose some of you remember Ada the Ayrshire.)

She even taught her offspring the same tricks. Maurice was one of her calves that learned it well. When her calves were young, she would usually come back into the field with the herd when the calves got hungry, but Maurice learned to break out too. But he took things further. He even crossed the road into our neighbor's

wheat field and helped himself. He did this one time right after the neighbor sprayed his wheat field with a pesticide. He survived. We were only too glad when he was large enough to sell. Alta and Maurice both got to wear a yoke that was intended to keep them from crawling under a fence, but it only made the crossings a bit more inconvenient.

The lesson I learned from these fence-breakers is that it isn't necessarily that the grass is greener on the other side of the fence; sometimes it is only because it is on the other side of the fence.

Now the sire of the herd was a large Brahma bull complete with the telltale hump on his shoulder. We called him Maj (for His Majesty, I suppose). He had our full respect although he was not normally dangerous.

One time in the middle of a very warm day, the cattle were all enjoying the shade of the wooded area along the cattle lane. But when any of the cattle attempted to walk to the water trough, he would run until he got in front of them and chase them back to the wooded area. If other cattle wanted to go out the other direction to go into a pasture field, he would do the same. He did this for several hours. Hmm, was there some instinct that was telling him that his herd should stay in the

shade? Did he know that the cattle might want to drink too much water on this particularly hot summer day? We thought this might be a possibility until we inquired from others and heard that other Brahma sires would at times keep their herds in a circle out in the middle of a large field.

Sometimes we decided to interfere with his keeping the herd “in subjection.” We chased him into the corral and put him into a pen so the cattle could go to the water trough. But the cattle had to go right past him and the older cattle wouldn’t go past him because he’d run up to the gate and snort. The younger ones didn’t have quite as much respect for him and would start going past him.

May we never use our position, stature, or personality to coerce others into “respect,” just because we can, whether it is on the job, in the home, church, or family.

“Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble” (I Peter 5:5).

What lessons have you learned from animals in your lives? It’s okay to learn from animals, but be careful when you start answering them when they talk to you, like Balaam. Listen to God first.

We don’t believe that animals have eternal souls, but do they have personalities? Or do they have animalities?



Announcement

Annual Calvary Bible School Cleanup

Come join us in our CBS cleaning November 6-8, 2022, in preparation for the next school year. This is open for young and older. Our new staff building will be included this year so we could really use 45-50 people. If you, your youth group, or other friends could help us, we would really appreciate it. Good food, lodging in the dorms, cleaning supplies, and evening volleyball will be provided.

If you are interested, contact Lowell Swartzentruber, (864) 378-3394, so we know how to plan. Please come help us!



Announcement

Faithful Men Seminar

November 12, 2022

Biblical Manhood

Being a man involves more than what a man does. Primarily, it involves what a man is. In this world, there are plenty of definitions of what a man should be. But in this seminar, we will explore various aspects of manhood from a Biblical perspective. This time together will focus on encouraging all of God's men to take their manliness to the next level.

First, we will see how the Bible portrays the characters of several men and how God illustrated their character through the stories of their lives. Next, we will look at different forms of leadership that men often employ and how those forms of leadership can help or hinder him and the ones he leads. Then, we will examine some aspects of life that cause significant challenges for men. Finally, we will illuminate the life of the Ultimate Man, the Man Christ Jesus.

Portraits of Men - Dave Snyder

Models of Leadership - Tom Johnson

Tests of Manhood - Ben Waldner

The Ultimate Man - David Martin



Seminar will be held at Light of Truth Conservative Mennonite Church, 14890 Navarre Rd. SW, Wilmot, OH 44689. Directions: Traveling on Rt. 250 to Wilmot, take Rt. 62 and go southwest approx. 1 mile. Church is on the left.

For more information or to register, please contact:

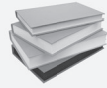
Deeper Life Ministries: (614) 873-1199 or info@dlmohio.org.

Opportunity has the uncanny habit
of favoring those who have paid
the price of years of **preparation.**



Announcement

ARE YOU LOOKING FOR EDUCATION THAT DEVELOPS MORE THAN YOUR INTELLECT?



- Faith Builders Training Institute offers an education that aims to shape students toward whole-hearted love for God and faithful commitment to His church.
- The Institute offers three tracks of study: Teacher Apprenticing, Christian Ministries, and General Studies.
- Each track includes our core curriculum that helps students to see themselves and the world in proper relation to God. We want our students to develop the capacities and skills they need to join the work God is doing in the world through His church.
- Join us for two years of study starting in August 2023! Our application deadline is March 1, 2023. Download an application at fbep.org/apply. Learn about our numerous scholarships at fbep.org/admissions/scholarships.
- Numerous colleges and universities award credit for work from Faith Builders. Depending on their degree program, Faith Builders alumni have begun four-year degree programs as sophomores or even juniors.
- fbep@fbep.org ph: 814-789-4518 extension 220

the bottom line

In Defense of Old Age

Aaron Lapp, Kinzers, PA

Dr. Ezekiel Emanuel has argued that 75 years is long enough for anyone to live. At 75, he says with professional emphasis, “we are no longer remembered as vibrant and engaged but as feeble, ineffectual, even pathetic.” He was 57 when his article was published in *The Atlantic* magazine. In a critique, two columnists in our newspaper were featured with a secular rebuttal. Both of them made a strong case for why

Emanuel was wrong, even foolish. At that time, he was a top-level medical advisor to then President Obama, which deemed national attention. One columnist wrote, “He is no garden-variety crackpot.”

In my time, life expectancy went from the low 70s on the average, to the high 70s, even to 81 for women today (Google). When I was a teenager in the 1950s, it was big news when a person of our acquaintance would

become 80 years old, regardless of his physical condition. In our Weavertown congregation, we have a number of persons 80 or older, 9 women and 10 men, as of August 15, 2022. One church sister is 99, and a church brother is 100. We have 37 church members aged 75 or older, which, contrary to Mr. Emanuel's comments, have not been gobbling up our country's resources with nothing to show in return. Some of them work every week day, some teach a Sunday School class, others do volunteer work, help take care of invalids, or do some counseling. Our church would be impoverished if they had arbitrarily been moved off the scenes of life at age 75.

For church member, Jonas Kauffman, he was given a ride in a hot air balloon for his 100th birthday. He told me this past Sunday that he wants a ride in a hang glider for his next birthday! Why not? Several years ago, he was still driving his car.

I will, by God's grace, become 85 years of age this month, choosing to feature this article in this month, as a way for you to celebrate my birthday with me. It caused me to think over my life in these 10 short years. Since I was 75, an arbitrary age selected by Mr. Emanuel, I have done lots of tractor work for my son, and by the call of God over the course of those

10 years, I gave myself to writing an extensive commentary of the New Testament. That became 18 books plus writing five other books on various Bible themes in that time.

By the grace of God, we traveled to church assignments in Kenya and Thailand. Meanwhile, we had a wonderful Bible-centered tour of Israel. In the last 10 years, my wife and I traveled to many churches in the U.S. and Canada to present my finance seminar and other opportunities for preaching God's Word. It never seemed as though it was too much; we always were enriched by the fellowship, willing to go wherever He leads. In our old age, we traveled to Central America, and later to Brazil, besides taking a four-week trip to the western states. All credit is due to God. Sometimes I feel so unworthy of His help and guidance in all of life. It seems as though I have not done much for Jesus, because most of my life was spent pursuing my own things.

There are others who have done just as much as we and more in their lifetime. There are likely Christian people by the thousands who would have given even more if they had the health and well-being. The lesson from nature in all plants and trees is that one gives and produces as long as there is life and vitality. Our lives are lived in faith toward our Creator and

Redeemer, and we can easily accept that many others have had a greater faith than we ourselves.

My point is that many people, Jew, Gentile, and Christian, have performed significantly in doing well and living productively at age 75 and beyond. Even aged people who are invalids do not live in vain. An invalid who is basically confined to a bed or a wheel chair and yet is thankful and praises God is of more value to God and man than a powerful king who praises himself and controls others. Many caregivers have been blessed by helping to provide for the aged and infirm. God values faithfulness more than He measures worth by the quantity of tangible production prior to being old and feeble.

Mr. Emanuel's punch words were about how we will be remembered after we go past age 75, which he insinuates will not be good. Being unproductive, plus using up other people's time and resources is a regrettable waste, he insists. The Bible says that human life is sacred, and our times and years are in God's hands as to duration, quality, and quantity.

Victor Hansen, one of the cited columnists, say Dr. Emanuel was one of the chief medical advisors who helped craft the Affordable Care Act, affordable mainly in name only. He says Dr. Emanuel takes this whole

issue "to a pathetic extreme, revealing his ignorance of both history and ethics." And we would add, also of the Bible as the highest of all laws and guidelines. History is full of many people who made their contribution to society at large after they became 75. And then there is no ethical route to terminate any person's life. As for the Bible, old age is well spoken of in many ways, and it favorably cites numerous people who were aged and well stricken in years.

The Bible speaks encouragingly of little children, youth, marriage, and old age. Little is said about middle age. "Youth looks ahead, old age looks back, and middle age looks tired!" (LeRay Martin). Old age is meant to be relished, not dreaded. We might fear being unneeded, then being unwanted. Jacob acknowledged to Pharaoh about being an old man and said to him, "*The days of the years of my pilgrimage are an hundred and thirty years: few and evil have the days of the years of my life been*" (Genesis 47:9). And after that, he lived another 17 years. Add 17 years to my life, and I would be 102!

The tendencies of middle age become either the fruit or fodder of old age. If only the future matters, those will soon lose their way in this present time. If only the past matters, we will soon dry up and be fossilized,

and become a museum piece!

Psalms 92 has a developing line about flourishing in old age in verses 12, 13, and 14. Hurrah for this one! *“The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree... Those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing.”* I don’t see any dead wood in these verses.

What is this about being fat? Amplified O.T. says “they shall be full of the sap of spiritual vitality and rich in trust, love, and contentment.” That fatness sounds desirable, and assumedly, it must be fed spiritual food.

At 75, God gave Abraham the promise of a son, having been childless all those years. When Moses was 80, God called him to lead the people of Israel out of Egypt, a congregation of upwards to 2,000,000 people. Caleb was 85 when he entered Palestine and was given his land allocation, a mountain region by his request. He was still as strong and vigorous as when he was sent by Moses to spy out the land 40 years earlier.

In the book of Ruth, in chapter 1, Naomi had no family; she was an old and bitter mother-in-law, a nobody, and a bereft widow, whose husband and two sons had died. Time marches on, guided by God. In chapter four,

she had a beautiful daughter-in-law who stayed with her, a wealthy son-in-law, and grandson who became the grandfather of Israel’s greatest monarch, King David. Old age can have wonderful surprises and unexpected joys.

Not every aged woman who is godly will have a son at 90 years of age, nor shall every godly 80-year-old man become the leader of a congregation with 2,000,000 members. But Jesus did say giving a cup of cold water shall be rewarded, and the woman who anointed Jesus’ feet would be spoken of throughout the whole world as a memorial of her.

The Bottom Line is that nothing is gained by being in denial about our old age. We should neither boast about it nor continually talk about it to people we meet. Old age with good health is a tremendous blessing, and we should honor God for it rather than crediting a special diet or how hard we worked.

P.S. Incidentally, at the very time this article was sent to our editor, Enos Stutzman and his wife, Mary, visited at our house. He is two days older than I, and has been the circulation manager and treasurer of *Calvary Messenger* for many years. He is another current example of flourishing and bringing forth fruit in old age. Everyone clap for Brother Enos!



“O Love, How Deep, How Broad”

(Webb/German folk)

James S. Martin

Lyrics: Every student of elementary geometry progresses from one dimension (lines), to two (area), and finally to three (space). This all correlates to the sensible three-dimensional physical world about him. But then a high school math or physics teacher disturbs this orderly model by suggesting the fourth dimension—or possibly infinite dimensions—at which point the timid students pivot to a career in the humanities.

This classic hymn text takes off from the Apostle’s line about the three-dimensional nature of God’s presence and love. “*That ye . . . may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth [width], and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge*” (Ephesians 3:17-19).

Notably, the third dimension is expressed in both directions: depth and height. This reflects the way we subconsciously perceive our life experiences in terms of altitude. Whether in depths of despair or on summits of delight, God’s love surrounds and immerses us. “*Whither shall I flee from thy presence?*” asks David. “*If I ascend up into heaven . . .*


if I make my bed in hell, behold thou art there” (Psalm 139:7, 8).

The text comes from a 15th century Latin manuscript, *O amor quam ecstasius*, printed in Karlsruhe, Germany. It has often been attributed to Thomas à Kempis (1380-1471), author of the devotional classic *The Imitation of Christ*. This is unsubstantiated and is likely based on a similarity of devotional style. Thomas was drawn to the Brethren of the Common Life, a Dutch pietist order that promoted self-denial, simple Christian living, and an earnest inner devotional life. The brothers were quite influential in the Netherlands and Germany and undoubtedly helped prepare the soil for the revivals of the Reformation.

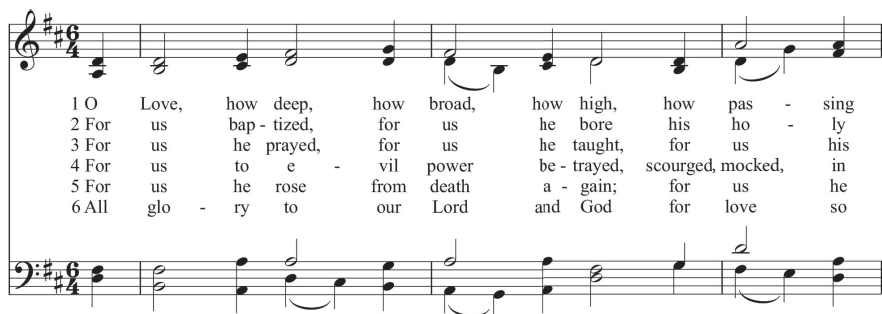
What we do know is that Benjamin Webb (1819-1885) blessed us with this English translation. Webb was a London clergyman in the Church of England and very active in the 19th century efforts to restore older forms of liturgy and architecture. Educated at Cambridge, Webb founded the Cambridge Camden Society, a highly influential architectural organization that vigorously (and controversially) promoted a return to Gothic church design. They protested against “ugly”

churches and sought to show how choices of architecture shape the theology of worship. It's a mercy Webb was spared the sight of the warehouses of worship dotting American suburbia these days.

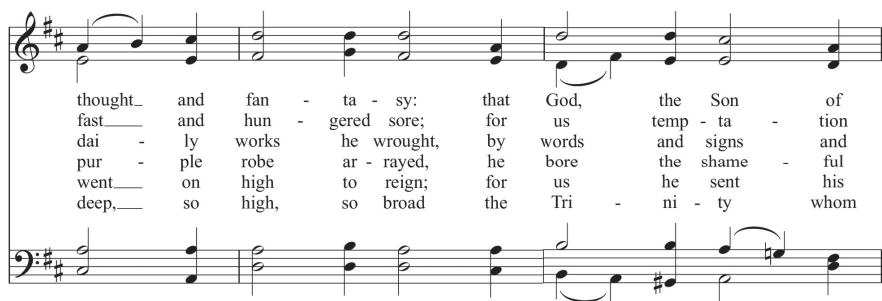
After you finish singing these verses, the phrase *for us* is what lingers in your

ear. Twelve times in this version alone, which includes only six of the original 23 stanzas, the unfathomable sacrifice of our Saviour is pointed toward the intention: *for us*. This echoes the other great John 3:16. "*Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us*" (1 John 3:16). 


O Love, How Deep, How Broad



1 O Love, how deep, how broad, how high, how pas - sing
 2 For us bap - tized, for us he bore his ho - ly
 3 For us he prayed, for us he taught, for us his
 4 For us to e - vil power be - trayed, scourged, mocked, in
 5 For us he rose from death a - gain; for us he
 6 All glo - ry to our Lord and God for love so



thought_ and fan - ta - sy: that God, the Son of
 fast_ and hun - gered sore; for us temp - ta - tion
 dai - ly works he wrought, by words and signs and
 pur - ple robe ar - rayed, he bore the shame - ful
 went_ on high to reign; for us he sent his
 deep, so high, so broad the Tri - ni - ty whom



God, should take our mor - tal form for mor - tals' sake!
 sharp he knew, for us the temp - ter o - ver - threw.
 ac - tions, thus still seek - ing not him - self, but us.
 cross and death, for us gave up his dy - ing breath.
 Spi - rit here to guide, to com - fort, and to cheer.
 we a - dore for - e - ver - more.

The Heart Cry of God

Alvin Zook, Hartville, OH

Repentance

This message came to me during three fiery trials that I experienced in October 2021. The first trial was the passing of my mother who died from the effects of COVID-19. The second trial was when I came down with COVID-19 and was so sick that I didn't know if I would pull through. The third trial was that because of my illness I couldn't attend my son's wedding. This was the most difficult trial of all.

God often uses these "storms" of life to show us various things. Sometimes He just wants us to be still and know that He has everything under control. At other times He will use a storm to reveal to us a new way. I experienced both, and during the last storm He opened up a message to me which I would like to share with you. This has become the burden of my heart that we as Christians hear and know the heart cry of God.

God brought several Scriptures to my mind and as I read and meditated on these verses I began to weep because God showed me what was in my heart. I began to see my heart as God sees it. I repented and asked God to forgive me. He heard and

answered my prayer.

God brought these Scriptures to my mind:

Isaiah 59:1 (RSV) "*Behold, the LORD's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save, or his ear dull, that it cannot hear; but your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you so that he does not hear.*"

This verse explains that because sin and lack of repentance have separated mankind from God's care, His all-powerful hand that would save, no longer can save, and His ear that would hear, no longer can hear.

Matthew 23:37 (RSV) Jesus is speaking. "*O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, killing the prophets and stoning those who are sent to you! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not!*"

This verse reveals the patient heart of Jesus, waiting and willing to save and heal, but they would not repent. How often has Jesus called out to me, and I have refused to heed His call?

In chapters two and three of the book of Revelation, John, under the direction of the Holy Spirit, wrote to the seven churches of Asia. In these

messages we can see the heart cry of God, how that in His great love for each church He commends them for their good points while also pointing out their sin and calling them to repentance. God drew my attention especially to the church of Laodicea. Revelation 3:15-17 says, *"I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked:"*

We see this same potential in 21st-century churches, including our plain congregations. I am very grateful for my godly heritage and to have been born into a conservative Mennonite family. However, I cannot trust that for my salvation. The temptation is to hide behind what we say, how we look, and what we do.

We are living in a society that is driven by the "almighty dollar." Amidst all the wealth and ease of life, am I becoming complacent, lukewarm, and so self-sufficient that I can no longer hear the "still small voice" of God? Are my priorities in the right place? Have my material possessions blinded me from truly

seeing God? Jesus' parable in Luke 12:16-20 describes a wealthy man who was so taken by his assets that he decided to store them up so he could *"eat, drink, and be merry."* God's reply to him was, "You foolish man, tonight you will die; then who will benefit from all your money?" The clear message is that God is the Giver of all good things. I should not let His bounties become my idols.

In Ezra 8-10 we read that Ezra repented and led the people in repentance. They were convicted by the reading of the law, and Ezra led them in putting away "strange things" including their unlawful marriages. It is impossible to please God if I have idols in my life.

Nehemiah is also a good example of one who obeyed the call of God. He began with a period of fasting, praying, and repenting. He then rose up, and despite many obstacles, rallied the people to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. Because of his strong devotion to God, he was able to complete the task.

Here are several passages that show the heart cry of God.

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

Continued on pg. 21...

marriages

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

Derstine-King

Bro. Weston, son of the late Joe and Dorcas Derstine, Milton-Freewater, OR, and Sis. Heidi, daughter of Jake and Joyce King, Arlington, KS, on July 9, 2022, at Arlington A.M. Church by Arlen Mast.

Martin-Gerber

Bro. Aden, son of Oscar and Susannah Martin, Perth, ON, and Sis. Rebecca, daughter of Raymond and the late Deborah Gerber, Brunner, ON, on August 6, 2022, at Faith Mennonite for Fairhaven A.M. Church by Arnold Jantzi.

Mast-Hochstedler

Bro. Marlin, son of James and Meriam Mast, Mays Lick, KY, and Sis. Karalee, daughter of Keith and Elmina Hochstedler, Amboy, IN, on September 24, 2022, at Bethany Church by Darlton Bontrager.

Peachey-Miller

Bro. Jeremy, son of Paul and Geneva Peachey, Paint Lick, KY, and Sis. Marita, daughter of Conrad and Lois Miller, Butler, OH, on August 5, 2022, at Berean Baptist Church for Living Hope Mennonite Church by Bennie Hostetler.



Schrock-Beachy

Bro. Jeron, son of Roger and Marilyn Schrock, Sugarcreek, OH, and Sis. Madison, daughter of Mark and Carolyn Beachy, Plain City, OH, on September 17, 2022, at United Bethel Church for Canaan Fellowship by Roger Hostetler.

Wengerd-Nisley

Bro. Micah, son of Wilmer and Clarellen Wengerd, Guys Mills, PA, and Sis. Katrina, daughter of John and Mary Nisley, Meadville, PA, on September 17, 2022, at Plainview Gospel Church by Roy Hershberger.



cradle roll

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

Byler, Nathanael and Kathryn (King), West Farmington, OH, fifth child, first daughter, Elisa Kate, August 1, 2022.

Esh, Jake and Emmy (Fisher), Elverson, PA, fourth child, third son, Jericho Allen, September 8, 2022.

Hershberger, Gabriel and Dinah (Yoder), Oskaloosa, KS, first child and daughter, Damaris Beth, July 30, 2022.

Keim, Daryl and LaNora (Troyer), Kokomo, IN, fifth child, fourth daughter, Olivia Saige, September 1, 2022.

Mast, Ryan and Monica (Yoder), Mechanicsburg, OH, first child and son, Cameron Brock, September 23, 2022.

McGrath, Chris and Rosanna (King), Taylorsville, NC, first child and daughter, Olivia Rose, May 26, 2022.

Miller, Allen and Fannie (Overholt), Hutchinson, KS, fifth child, second daughter, Karmen Nicole, August 24, 2022.

Peachey, Jason and Jessica (Beachy), Eagle Rock, VA, first child and daughter, Raquel Briana, September 10, 2022.

Peachey, Travis and Alison (Sauder), Capon Bridge, WV, first child and daughter, Bridget Vionne, August 29, 2022.

Sommers, Evan and Janean (Yoder), Hiddenite, NC, third child and son, Colton Samuel, June 19, 2022.

Stoltzfus, Duane and Julia (Smoker), McVeytown, PA, third child and daughter, Tiana Ranae, August 9, 2022.

Stoltzfus, Jared and Elizabeth (Stutzman), Romney, WV, first child and daughter, Skylar Brooke, July 15, 2022.

Swarey, Edwin and Tiffany (Eaton), Auburn, KY, fourth and fifth children, third daughter, Caroline Faith, second son, Collin James, September 5, 2022.

Swarey, John Mark and Maria Ann (Miller), Centreville, MI, third child, first daughter, Jayci Shavonne, July 1, 2022.

Yoder, Johnny and Judy (Yoder), Max Meadows, VA, fifth child, fourth son, Kendrick Myles, August 5, 2022.

Yoder, Justin and Missy (Good), Woodville, NY, sixth child, fifth son, Asher Blake, July 16, 2022.

Yoder, Keith and Melody (Eash), Slanesville, WV, currently serving in El Salvador, third child, second daughter, Emma Caroline, July 8, 2022.

Yoder, Roman and Brenda (Miller), Clarkson, KY, ninth child, seventh daughter (one deceased), Rosalind Gail, August 25, 2022.

Yoder, Ryan and Summer (Mobley), Stanardsville, VA, second child and daughter, Ivy Jane, August 12, 2022.

Yoder, Tim and Karen (Miller), Oskaloosa, KS, second child, first daughter, Katherine Elizabeth, August 28, 2022.

Yoder, Timothy and Clara (Kuhns), Auburn, KY, fourth child, first daughter, Cadence Fern, September 8, 2022.

Zook, Jesse and Marilyn (Peachey), Mifflintown, PA, second child and son, Declan William, August 26, 2022.

Zook, Mike and Emily (Schrock), Stone Creek, OH, fourth child and son, Anders William, September 12, 2022.

Correction for September Cradle Roll:
Albrecht, Adrian and Regina (Byler), Brunner, ON, third child, **first daughter**, Amy Regina, June 2, 2022.



Mast, Rhonda Renae, 45, of Weatherford, OK, passed away on August 18, 2022, surrounded by family and friends. She was born November 11, 1976, in Weatherford to Perry Jay and Margie (Billington) Mast.

She attended Jefferson Christian School and graduated from Pilgrim High School, Hutchinson, KS, in 1995. She was a dedicated Christian and member of Zion A.M. Church.

Rhonda volunteered at Faith Mission Home and helped care for handicapped children. Later, she taught school in PA and impacted many lives. She also cared for the elderly. Rhonda enjoyed being with family and friends. She especially enjoyed singing and listening to music.

Surviving are her parents, brothers: Keith (Linda), Honey Brook, PA, Nathan (Hanna), Weatherford; brother-in-law, Taylor Lee, Cassopolis, MI; five nieces: Melody (Joshua) Martin, Melissa (Jonathan) King, Marietta, Marjorie, and Makayla Mast; nephew, Donovan Mast, great-niece, Kezia Martin, and great-nephew, Hudson King.

She was preceded in death by her mother, Margie Mast, three siblings: Lareeta Kay Mast, Martha Elaine Lee, Timothy Peter Mast; grandparents: John B. and Fannie Mast, Otis and Marie Billington, and Peter and Sylvia Borkholder.

The funeral was held on August 20,

2022, at Pequea A.M. Church, Narvon, PA. A second service was held on August 24, 2022, at Pleasant View Mennonite Church, OK. Burial followed at the Zion A.M. Church cemetery.

Miller, Joseph Gerald "Joe," 78, of Auburn, KY, passed away September 12, 2022, at the Logan Memorial Hospital in Russellville. Joe was born in Virginia on January 6, 1944, to the late Roy Frances and Melinda (Troyer) Miller.

He was a member of the Plainview Mennonite Church and retired from Logan Memorial Hospital where he was a respiratory therapist.

Joe is survived by his wife of 57 years, Susanna (Troyer); five sons: Steve (Melissa), Auburn; Joe Jr. (Regina), Temple, TX; Kevin (Christina), Lyndon, KS; Anthony, Auburn; Wayne (Rhonda), Auburn; two daughters: Gloria (David) Mast, Fairview, UT; Angela (Johnny) Stoltzfus, Narvon, PA; 44 grandchildren and 28 great-grandchildren.

Joe was preceded in death by three brothers: Eugene Miller, Maynard Miller, and Frances Miller; and three sisters: Ellen Overholt, Martha Miller, and Betty Miller.

The funeral service was held September 16, 2022, at the Plainview Mennonite Church with the local ministry serving. The burial followed at the church cemetery.

Schrock, Truman, 82, of Thomas, OK, passed away March 30, 2022, at his home, three weeks after a massive heart attack. He was born December 11, 1939, to Amos and Lydia (Yoder) Schrock. He was first married to Alice Mae Yoder on September 25, 1960. She died six years later of cancer. Truman then married Laura Stutzman on October 22, 1967.


Truman accepted Christ in his youth and was a member of the Zion A.M. Church of Thomas.

He enjoyed farming and ranching until his death. His hobbies were collecting antiques and visiting shut-ins. He also enjoyed clearing land of trees, leveling dirt, and building dams and ponds.

Truman is survived by his wife, Laura, and five children: Wayne (Joan), Freeman (Margaret), Loretta (Paul) Wingard,

Larry (Haley), all of Thomas; Lisa (Mel) Miller, Huntsville, AR; 15 grandchildren: Rachelle (Anthony) Glick, SC; Dakota, Hunter, and Lance Schrock; Shannon (J. Paul) Yoder; Chandler, Clement (Kodee), Francesca Schrock; Jessica, Cody, and DeVon Wingard; Jake and Mac Schrock, all of Thomas; Colton and Serena Miller, AR; three great-grandchildren: Mary Etta Schrock, James Laveau Yoder, both of Thomas; and Mason Roy Glick, SC.

He was preceded in death by his parents, Amos and Lydia, first wife, Alice Mae, brother, Joni, and sister-in-law, Edith.

The funeral service was held April 2, 2022, at Zion A.M. Church with Rex Yoder and Truman Yoder serving. Burial was in the church cemetery. 

observations

In a 2016 Barna survey of young people in the USA, 32% of the respondents felt that it is always or almost always wrong to view pornography. In the same survey, 56% felt that it was wrong to avoid recycling. The age of the survey respondents was not given.

I can think of a lot of positive things related to the concept of recycling. I am not inclined to explore, in this space, the value and downsides of recycling or avoiding recycling. But I trust that pornography is not

a negotiable issue for any of us. I mention this survey simply to note the difference in how important these things seemed to those responding to the survey. I expect that if this survey was taken in our church there would be some variety on the recycling question. But I trust that we would be 100% persuaded that pornography is wrong. It's likely that the same could be said about your congregation.

While we agree together that compromise that includes pornography consumption is

wrong, I wish I could assert with confidence that our stated belief is perfectly mirrored by our personal experiences. Without going into detail here, I have heard and seen enough to know two things. First, that we as plain people are not immune to the ravages that pornography and sexual sin bring. Second, we serve a God Who is eager and able to deliver His children from any and every sin and blot. I rejoice in the testimonies of fellow Christians I know who have experienced forgiveness from these sins and are walking in newness of life. He not only invites us to holiness but enables us to live according to His purpose and plan. Praise the Lord for His mercy and goodness!

• • • • •

In 2014, Russia moved into the Ukrainian territory of Crimea and after a brief show of strength, conducted a referendum in which the residents had the opportunity to indicate their preference to stay with Ukraine or join Russia. Over 95% voted in favor of joining Russia. Russia promptly annexed Crimea, and they now consider the Crimean territory to be part of Russia.

As of this writing, Russia is in the process of conducting similar referendums in four Ukrainian territories bordering Russia. Early reports are that those voting to

join Russia in these referendums exceed 95% again. The expectation of many is that Putin will announce that Russian annexation of these territories in the next few days.

It isn't surprising that a combination of historical and cultural ties and geographical proximity would make some residents in these territories somewhat open to Russian overtures. But even given those circumstances, it feels impossible to reconcile the percentages being reported with any semblance of reality. After all, these referendums are conducted under the occupation of an invading army, by the invading authorities, after many of those who oppose the occupation have fled. In some cases it has been reported that Russian soldiers went door-to-door to conduct the voting. There is something about casting a vote while positioned at the business end of a rifle that provides profound incentive to vote according to the preferences of those holding the rifle. The groundswell of international outcry is that these referendums are a sham without any pretense of legitimacy.

Those following the situation feel that the timing of these most recent referendums is so that Russia can declare these territories as their own and defend them appropriately. Putin has stated that any incursion

on Russian territory will be seen as an act of war and that they will respond decisively and vigorously to any existential threat to their Russian motherland. When Putin unilaterally declares that broad swaths of Ukraine are now a part of the Russian motherland, it injects a different set of dynamics into the travesty of this conflict.

It is possible that by the time you read this, these events will have grown stale in the news cycle. But currently, Putin's threats of using nuclear weapons and the dire warnings of Biden and others of due retaliation, make for a lot of figurative hand-wringing.

The whole situation, Ukraine's recent military success, Russia's decision to conduct a draft to bolster troop numbers, the referendums, the threat of nuclear escalation, unrest in Russia by those opposed to the draft, etc., is quite troublesome. To characterize this as tense and volatile seems like a major understatement.

While the ripple effects of this war affect us somewhat, most of us on this side of the Atlantic Ocean are relatively removed from the immediacy of this conflict. But not all of our brothers and sisters in Christ can say the same thing. Let's pray for each other and for those involved in the war effort. May the Prince

of Peace rule in our hearts and in the affairs of men. Let's continue to labor to bring Christ's Kingdom to the hearts and lives of men today. As Christ taught us to pray in Matthew 6:10, "*Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.*"

• • • • •

I recently heard some comments that I will reference rather than quote, since I am better able to recall my thoughts about those comments than the original comments.

When people are converted, oftentimes the desire to avoid hell and go to heaven figure prominently into that decision. From our earthbound and human perspective, it would seem difficult to overstate the significance and difference of these two eternal destinies. However, isn't it true that Jesus talked more about establishing His Kingdom on earth than He did about preparing for heaven? Maybe it is improper to separate the two, but I wonder sometimes if my teaching reflects the same priority and balance that Jesus' teaching does on these matters.

The person that I referred to observed that many of us, especially young people, find that the prospect of preparing for an eternity that stretches so far into the future that we can't really grasp it, isn't particularly compelling to many of us. It feels

to some believers like eternity will “begin” sometime in the future. But in the meantime there is a lot to do and experience. As Christians age, the immediacy of eternity and an increased awareness of our own mortality shifts these things for us. But we are so earthly in our perspective that for many of us, eternity seems more distant than it should.

However, an invitation to be part of a vibrant Kingdom here and now that is life-giving, others-seeking, Spirit-directed, and aligned with Christ’s priorities has practical and immediate implications. This brother went on to say that we should spend less energy trying to go to heaven and more energy in helping His Kingdom to come to earth now as Christ taught us to pray. After all, entering His Kingdom here and now and abiding in the same, will mean that the “going to heaven” priority is also addressed. Let’s be involved in building Christ’s Kingdom here on earth and inviting others to join in the effort. Then we can experience the blessing of His Kingdom here and now while eagerly anticipating the eventual eternal manifestation of

His Kingdom at His second coming or our death, whichever comes first. Maranatha!

• • • • •

Queen Elizabeth II was installed as Queen of the Commonwealth realms on February 6, 1952. Her 70-year reign ended with her death on September 8 of the current year. There is much I do not understand about the function and structure of royalty in the United Kingdom. There is a lot that could be said about the relative merits and problems associated with her reign. But it is striking to note that during her 70-year reign, more than 50 British colonies attained independence from Great Britain. The list is too long to print here. But I am too young to imagine how the world functioned before countries like Belize and Kenya achieved their independence. Of course, the USA declared its independence from Britain about 250 years ago. But the influence and reach that the British empire has had and continues to exert is notable in the history and affairs of the kingdoms of this world today. The reign of Queen Elizabeth II overlapped with the last 70 years of this history.



*Love is a fabric that never fades, no matter how often
it is washed in the waters of adversity and grief.*

The Heart Cry of God...continued from pg. 13

“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light” (Matthew 11:28-30).

“Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him,

and will sup with him, and he with me” (Revelation 3:20).

After praying for several weeks, I felt God leading me to write this article. I believe the message we need to hear in our churches is repentance. The time is short, and we don't have much time left.

May God bless those who read this.



A Joyful Calling

Sheryl Zeiset, Lebanon, PA

I stepped quietly down the stairs, my eyes groggy. It was midnight and a soft light glowed from my parents' room. My new baby brother was crying, probably what had woken me up at this hour, and I decided to check on Mom and wee baby.

My mother was picking him up, crooning softly. I expected her to look weary. Instead, her eyes were sparkling with delight as she exclaimed, “Oh, he's just hungry!” She settled into the rocking chair and soon the house was restored to its midnight quiet.

Her joy at getting up in the middle of the night to feed her baby made a deep impression on my 18-year-old mind. She gave me the unspoken message that this baby was wanted

and loved, and she found deep delight in caring for him. This was her ninth baby and I had often seen this in my mother, but this time it felt extra special.

Was my mother deprived of a fulfilling life?

Throughout history, the role of a woman and motherhood has been evaluated and reevaluated; respected and demonized by turn. In the early 1900s, girls dreamed of becoming a mother just as their mothers and grandmothers before them. By the 1970s, the centuries-old classic role of women was under attack. As one woman wrote, “I was busy raising my four children. These were the happiest years of my life, and we were shocked to suddenly hear that

mothering only takes a third-grade education and a fulltime mother is unnecessary. Mothers who were applauded by society were suddenly bombarded with a new buzzword—fulfillment”¹

Today, according to some online reports, roughly 27% of infants and toddlers in America are placed in some form of paid childcare arrangement. Many of these mothers say they are happier and healthier on the job than they are at home with their children. Perhaps they are happier because taking on a challenge provides a sense of well-being rather than living “discontentedly” at home. God’s will is that women of God would find their deepest joy and fulfillment in their homes and with their children.

*“The aged women likewise, that they be in behaviour as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things; that they may **teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed**” (Titus 2:3-4).*

In the past, the term “a keeper at home” had a more clearly understood and defined definition. Today we

can stay at home and yet still be consumed with “...*wandering about from house to house...*” (I Timothy 5:13) on our phones. In II Timothy, Paul continues, “...*This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves...*” (II Timothy 3:1-2). How much of my messaging and communication is consumed with loving myself? Technology can be a useful tool, but it can also become a distracting vice and addiction. It can also be a source of depression and discouragement if my house, décor, birthday cakes, or holidays are compared with all the perfect accomplishments of others. Choosing to stay at home in your focuses and thoughts produces peace and contentment.

God says, “*Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD: and the fruit of the womb is his reward*” (Psalm 127:3). Our children are His heritage and His reward! In a noisy world, full of other distractions, let’s not lose sight of this.

We want to keep a mother’s role respected and well-defined. But even in the church, time and technology are changing things and a subtle influence has crept in. Lucrative online businesses grab our attention, breeding a subtle discontent. “Me time” and “self-care” have become

¹ Marionstar.com/story/opinion/2015/05/09/role-mothers-change-years/270511951

buzzwords and we are fascinated with new culture fads like coffee shops and shopping malls, each of which can take focus and energy away from our children. For some it is easier to focus on the newest décor or an affluent lifestyle rather than a large family.

While some may question or wish to debate how many children are too many, or too little, let's remember that God has given us some clear principles on this issue. *"Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD: and the fruit of the womb is his reward. As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are children of the youth. Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them: they shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate"* (Psalm 127:3-5). The Scripture passages that speak about children show us that God's view regarding children is quite different from the prevailing view that many have in our world today.

An even more subtle question that I see young women wrestling with is this: "Is it more spiritual to be involved in ministry than to bring more children into the world?" I wrestled through this question as a young mother. All my work in the house was done with a subconscious "I'll get this done quickly and then I'll have time for more important things." But when I look at the

example of older, godly mothers, I see that their home and children were their important work—their focus.

My calling as a mother is not an inferior calling. A peaceful home is an oasis for hurting people, and few things are as refreshing and beautiful as children who are loved and "trained up" in the ways of God. An orderly happy family is a powerful witness to our communities, and it is one way truth is propagated. It is not a choice between family or ministry, but rather family is ministry and together we can minister to others. No, it is not a ministry that all are called to; some are called to singleness, while others go through the difficulty of infertility. In each of these we are called to a selfless life of service to God and others.

Elisabeth Elliot said, "The process of shaping the child, shapes also the mother herself. Reverence for her sacred burden calls her to all that is pure and good, that she may teach primarily by her own humble, daily example."² Reverence—first to God and then to our sacred calling—allows our own souls to be purified as we live in obedience to this calling.

In these busy years, it is easy to feel overwhelmed and discouraged with the daily responsibilities, but God

² Bookroo.com 22 of the best book quotes from Elisabeth Elliot

sees the big picture of what is being accomplished. It is infinitely more glorious than the messy floors and hungry tummies that I see. He sees the souls being birthed and raised, each one as a potential soldier in His kingdom. He sees what He is doing in our hearts as we learn to unselfishly give to our families. He is actively involved, even when all I can see is the challenge of today.

Eventually, the child-bearing and child-raising years are over. Children grow up and leave home. Then what? In Titus 2, godly older women are described as “...*teachers of good things*” (Titus 2:3). They are given the directive: “*That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed*” (Titus 2:4-5).

“*Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. For Adam was first formed, then Eve*” (I Timothy 2:11-13). Just as Paul instructs us, we believe in women being silent in the church, but this doesn't mean that women are to be silent in all situations, places, and relationships. God has an important ministry for older women who have

learned valuable life lessons and have the ability to encourage and disciple the younger generation. The younger women also have an important ministry “...*to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed*” (Titus 2:4-5).

God doesn't need perfect women to teach the younger, rather He wants those who are honest, humble, and willing. Often the best advice is born out of experience. If you have made mistakes in your marriage, if you have gone through infertility or grief and have come out as a better person, you are all the more qualified to disciple a younger woman. Experience brings compassion for another's pain and equips you to understand and articulate the path forward for a struggling younger woman.

I hear the cry of younger women desiring to have an older sister walk beside them, but I also see older women shrinking from the task. Can we change this? Perhaps you struggle with fear as you think of being vulnerable. Perhaps you feel like you don't have the time it takes to include others in your life. These hindrances are common to us all, but we can, by the grace of God, push past these fears and fulfill God's will

for us as women.

- Reach out and ask. Don't always wait until someone pursues you. Choose one younger woman to befriend and learn the inner thoughts and questions of her heart. If you have never learned how to be vulnerable in your relationships, ask God to teach you. And He will.


- Start with small gestures of encouragement and love. These will grow into relationships, and opportunities to influence.

- Be willing to sacrifice your time. Ministry is a lifestyle of caring more about others than ourselves. God needs us to be willing to use our voice. It is His way for us to reproduce our spiritual values and bless the next generation.

Teaching others about the things of God strengthens everyone involved—

the teacher and the disciple. Truth, dissected and taught, settles into the heart. Don't believe the lie that we don't need spiritual vulnerability with each other. We do need it since it is vital for our on-going growth and maturity. It is also vital for the health of the church and for the next generation.

Busy young mother or older woman, whatever stage of life you're in, God has given you the tools through His Spirit to be an influence for good in the lives of those around you.

"And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not" (Galatians 6:9). 

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Sticks and *stones* are hard on bones,

Aimed with angry art.

Words can sting

like anything,

But silence
breaks the *heart*.

- PHYLLIS MCGINLEY



The Power of Thanksgiving

Floyd Stoltzfus, Gordonville, PA

I am reflecting on my life. Is there anything wrong with that? I don't think so as long as we do not wallow in discouragement and despondency of our past mistakes, carnal practices, and sinful habits. Then we need to check our motives. We should not become "puffed up" or elated with our accomplishments. The Apostle Paul reflected over his past life numerous times. *"I say again, Let no man think me a fool, if otherwise, yet as a fool receive me, that I may boast a little...Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep;...Besides those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches"* (II Corinthians 11:23-28).

Four weeks ago I had open heart surgery. I did not have a heart attack, and my veins and arteries tested clear. This surgery may have been

long overdue. I was diagnosed with a "severe mitral valve regurgitation," a badly leaking heart valve, which the surgeons were able to repair without the installation of animal tissue.

I am now in the recuperation stage regaining strength by doing various exercises. This also includes numerous doctor appointments and home visits with nurses and therapists all for the purpose of a healthy recovery. I can say that the medical facilities that we are under are professional, extremely helpful and kind, and desire the best for their patients.

This period of recovery is a school. I want to make the best of it and learn what God is patiently teaching me. One of the lessons God wants me to learn is to praise Him more and more. Someone came up with the following statistics. If God gave us a life of 70 years, the average person would spend it as follows:

- three years in education
- eight years in amusements
- six years at the dinner table
- five years in transportation
- four years in conversation

- fourteen years in work
- three years in reading
- twenty-four years in sleeping

Now compare the following. Suppose you went to church at least one hour every week and prayed five minutes every morning and every evening. What would this total come to? Around five months out of 70 years for the Lord. (Remember these are statistics, and do not reflect anyone specifically).

Praising the Lord has spiritual power and is a vital, living force that should be the healthy exercise of every Christian. *"Oh God, my heart is fixed; I will sing and give praise..."* (Psalm 108:1). David's "fixed" heart was a determined wholeheartedness to praise the Lord. *"Praise ye the Lord. I will praise the Lord with my whole heart, in the assembly of the upright, and in the congregation"* (Psalm 111:1) *"...O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good: for his mercy endureth forever"* (Psalm 106:1). LORD, teach us to praise. When? *"My praise shall continually be of thee"* (Psalm 71:6); *"All the day long"* (Psalm 35:28); *"At all times"* (Psalm 34:1); *"Seven times a day"* (Psalm 119:164).

William B. Young wrote, "Sincere praise is a dispeller of despair and depression. It will lift you out of the wilderness atmosphere and make your spirit a watered garden, a spring

of water whose waters fail not. Satan is a master at loading people down (especially missionaries) with cares, worries, anxieties, and pressures of life. These are weights that bog down the saints of God. They hinder spiritual progress. They make the soul sick. Shed these weights at the Cross of Christ and leave them there. Put on *"the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness"* (Isaiah 61:3). Wear it and in every circumstance give thanks.

In the book of Isaiah tucked among the judgments of God and the doom of some nations is beautiful prophecy of God's marvelous salvation: *"And in that day thou shalt say, O Lord, I will praise thee: Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation. Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation"* (12:1-3).

Thank God for a biblical Anabaptist persuasion and interpretation of Scripture. Our praise to God will be enhanced by studying great themes of the Bible such as Jesus' teachings in the Sermon on the Mount and wholehearted discipleship. Then Paul's teaching on obedience, the righteousness of God, justification, propitiation, consecration, nonconformity, and nonresistance,

all in the book of Romans, can be a springboard of praise to our great God. Praise will expand our joy in the Lord. There is power and victory over the devil, the flesh, and the world

by praising God more and more. Praise is the language of Heaven. Complaining, weeping, and wailing are the everlasting groanings of hell fire.



A Woman After God's Heart

Show and Tell Part 2

Susan Schlabach, Ripley, OH



Share candidly and vulnerably. I'd be telling my youngsters about happenings that involved my moms, and they'd often ask, "Which mom?" Eventually we learned to talk about my background sorted into sections: mom 1, mom 2, and mom 3. Resist the urge to sugarcoat or mask. Life is what it is and our children need to watch us deal with failure, loss, and imperfection. As parents or teachers of children we are in a strategically powerful position. We get to choose the stories, and we get to relate them intentionally at just the right times in an effort to draw our children into the drama of life. Our listeners will be quick to observe—through our stories—what we honor, what makes us worry, or what makes us come alive. Our tone, our dancing eyes, and choked emotions carry even more weight than our words.

Whether or not we're willing to tell our stories could actually add up to a life or death difference. That was cemented in my mind by the following story. In the beginning years of raising our little ones, we were all eyes and ears about *getting this right*. One day we became aware that folks living down the road were suddenly preparing for a wedding. Others whispered to us about fornication and that it really wasn't surprising since the mom and dad had had that kind of wedding too. But then, we were told, those things were never talked about in their home. I wondered if the top-secret approach was an effort to squelch or deny? We were in the middle of parenting, and I mused about the possibility of our choices having seemingly inevitable consequences. About that time, I observed the lives of an older couple who'd begun marriage in

that same context. Over the years, I watched their children courting and marrying, all with pure, godly values and practices. I learned that that mother and father had discussed at appropriate times with their children about their own failure and remorse. I observed that by God's grace and their open-hearted approach, their story of sinful regret was transformed into a beautiful story of repentance and redemption.

Share your story. It can minister life to those who hear. It can also free up a part of you that needs expression. Sharing your story can be a beautiful way to turn what the enemy intends for defeat and evil into a testimony of redemption and praise for our compassionate, sovereign God! When we use our difficult stories, not as an excuse, but as a testimony of God freeing us from our past, it's like we pull the carpet out from under the enemy. Revelation 12:11 says it too: *they overcame him (the enemy) by the word of their testimony.* A quote from Brene Brown: *"One day you will tell your story of how you overcame what you went through, and it will become someone else's survival guide."*

Recently, at a reunion of friends we worked with 25 years ago, we shared snippets of our lives around the circle in a summarizing effort to

catch up on what was shaping our lives. We heard about the death of a spouse, about a dad remarrying, and about time spent with a dad as he was dying. We heard about failed adoption, about a mom's passing, about a brush with cancer, and about puzzling difficulty and changes. There were awkward pauses, easy tears, and choked emotions. There was admission of fear and uncertainty. I went home with more than if I'd sat through a deeply theological lecture. The lessons I learned with this group were intensely personal. It was the difference between reading black and white text or watching the real thing. I saw truth and conviction being fleshed out in moms' responses to muddy little girls. I saw gentlemanly teen sons illustrate godly choices and selfless service. I saw parents who are humbly following God in hard places with challenging assignments.

In our congregation the process of membership includes telling your story. Everyone has the privilege to stand behind the pulpit, and beginning from birth to present, tell us about the important events that shaped their lives and in brief, their journey towards and with God. These are heart-searching times for all of us as we empathize, and truly try to understand where each is coming


from. Later, as I relate to these individuals closely, I remember their stories, and nod inwardly to myself, “that makes sense.”

Must all stories be told? I used to own a story that was too hard to tell. A powerful voice insisted that it was too shameful for others to hear. One day a sister hinted about my secret and explained that it is in allowing light to enter the darkness that the hard story would relinquish its power over me. It is still not a story to shout from the housetops, but it is a story that no longer holds me captive by its taunting shame. I have found that in each telling, God’s truth is amplified and Satan’s lies are silenced. What once held me in whimpering defeat, now trumpets the overwhelming forgiveness, transformation, and acceptance of a Holy God!

What if your hard story implicates a loved one? Seek God and a trusted confidante on the matter. Find a safe person and haul your story out piece by awkward piece and expose it once for all to another set of ears. Satan cowers in exposure.

God’s redemption of hard things is magnified. Our motivation for telling should not be vengeful or to make room for old baggage, but alone as a testimony of God’s freedom and forgiveness.

Learn how to encourage those around you to tell their stories. Ask leading questions that don’t dig and trespass privacy, but questions that reflect sincere interest and compassion. Squash the urge to one-up the account you’re listening to. Allow your friend to be center stage. Active listeners help to shape meaningful storytellers.

God bless you for telling many stories. In our stories we tell our children and the world Who God is—in full color with sight and sound. In stories, it’s like we show pictures of walking like Jesus. And as our own ears hear us tell our stories again and again, the truth only settles in deeper that all of truth is really God’s Truth. Our stories are only small chapters of His larger, grander story. And wonder of wonders, we’re called to be part of His Show and Tell! 

I recommend you take care of the minutes,
for hours will take care of *themselves*.

—LORD CHESTERFIELD

CALVARY MESSENGER



The Recycled Orchestra

Mary Lynita Eby, Dundee, NY

Near Paraguay's capital city of Asunción lies Cateura, the home of a large landfill. The mountains immediately surrounding Cateura are made of trash, not stone. The local river routinely overflows into the landfill, causing necessary evacuations every year.

The population of Cateura is approximately 40,000 people who live in this literal world of trash. Most make their living by scavenging for items of value in the mountains of trash.

The future seemed bleak, especially for the children of Cateura. The toxins of trash, the stench of trash, and the 1500 tons of additional trash per day, all combined to create a dismal tomorrow.

Look more closely into Cateura, and you will see Ada, a little girl living in this landfill town. She learned a love for music from her grandma, who took care of her while her parents were at work. She remembers falling in love with the musical notes of the violin. Her father, a *gonchero* (one who recycles), works at the dump, using his metal hook to tear

into plastic bags to unearth items of value. Cardboard is worth \$.05/lb. Plastic is \$.10/lb.

Ada wonders what her future will be like.

And then—Favio Chavez had an idea: teach the local children how to play music on musical instruments. Favio hung up a sign offering free music lessons, and Ada's grandma signed her up immediately. But for the initial 10 children who wished to learn to play on the violin, there were only three violins. New violins cost a lot, more than their own houses.

Because of the immense local poverty, Favio knew the children could not afford regular musical instruments. Where else could he get what he needed? He approached a talented inventor-minded local man, named Don "Cola" Gomez, and asked him if he could make musical instruments, sourcing needed items from the landfill. Don agreed.

Now, Favio teaches the children, who learn to play on—

Cellos made from oil barrels and drums from X-ray plates,

And

Violins crafted from cans, wooden spoons, and bent forks,

And

Guitars created from packing crates,

And

Saxophones ingeniously put together using a drainpipe, melted copper, coins, spoon handles, cans, and bottle caps.

Favio taught Ada, who has now learned to play beautifully on her recycled violin. When Favio taught his music classes, he included life lessons such as “Playing an Instrument Is a Process” and “Be Polite” and “Respect Everyone,” along with his lessons of music.

In the first years the Recycled Orchestra numbered around 40 children. Ada and the others worked hard, first practicing diligently in their outdoor class where temperatures could top 100 degrees, then practicing at home. Now they had something worthwhile to do rather than turning to drugs and bad company.

Eventually, they were given greater opportunities beyond Cateura.

The Recycled Orchestra has given the children of trash city a hope and a life beyond garbage. “This has included opportunities to sing both

in Paraguay and out of the country. The Recycled Orchestra has been able to use finances from their tours to build some decent housing and to give back locally in their community. First, the Recycled Orchestra gave music to their community. Next, they became a beacon of hope for a better future. And now, they are inspiring not only Cateura, but many more when they say,

“The world gives us trash, but we give back music.”

What is the trash in your life?

Is there trash around you that can be made into something else?

Or maybe, especially for us older folks, the trash is more figurative, with trashy circumstances and problems. That trash, is it trash? Or is it a resource waiting to be recycled?

What do you have to give back to your community?

Resources:

thenationalnew.com “Paraguay’s Recycled Orchestra turns garbage into gold”

www.npr.org “From Trash to Triumph: The Recycled Orchestra”

“Ada’s Violin, the Story of the Recycled Orchestra” by Susan Hood

amp.theguardian.com “The junk orchestra: making music out of a landfill” by Karl Mathiesen



The Cost of Commitment

Josh Kooistra, New Concord, OH

In the world today, persecution is more widespread and prevalent than ever before. A young Nigerian college student named Deborah Samuel was beaten and then set on fire by her fellow students for posting about Jesus on her social media. Her persecutors filmed the whole ordeal, shouting, “Allahu Akbar!” Muslim clerics in that area of Nigeria are calling on Muslims to kill Christians if they say anything that goes against Islam. “Don’t even give them a chance to explain or repent,” one ordered. “Just kill them on the spot and let Allah sort it out!” There are currently more documented cases of Christian martyrs in Nigeria than all other nations combined, and the death toll is growing at an alarming rate. Current estimates have a Christian in Nigeria dying for their faith at a rate of about one every two hours.

Meanwhile, on the other side of the world, we as western Christians live in relative luxury with very little true persecution. This does not automatically make us lesser

Christians, but that can very easily become the case. Wherever you are right now, take a moment to reflect on your upbringing. Although all of the following statements may not be true for all of us, they are true for many of us. Most of us were raised in godly homes with Christian values, teaching, and heritage. The majority of us have had a Christian education and the support of our parents to do so. We have been in and around church our whole lives. Many of us have taken part in evangelizing at some point and time (if we haven’t, we should), whether passing out tracts, conducting street meetings, witnessing, or gospel singing, and all without fear of bodily harm. We must take into account that many Muslims are in the same position we are. They have been born and raised in the Muslim faith. They have participated in and experienced the Muslim equivalent of what we have. Some factions of Muslims persecute other factions (Sunni vs Shias). There are devout Muslims who are passionate about Allah. There are some Muslims

who would wish we would convert to Islam. We know that Allah is not the same as our God because he is a god of violence, and lacks mercy, grace, and forgiveness. Radical Islam promotes violence and oppression. It seeks to convert through fear and force. Our faith gives us a choice—a crossroad—one in which we must choose whether to follow God or reject Him. The conflict may well be more between our God and theirs as opposed to us and them.

When we choose to follow Christ and repent from our sins, we experience the new birth. As a result, we begin to transform (aka sanctification). Soon after our new birth experience, we are encouraged to join ourselves to a body of believers (aka the church) through baptism. It's an emotional time, and I'm always blessed by young people who stand in front of that crowd and despite their nervousness, with a clear voice and eyes they give their testimony and commit to honoring God and the church. It is a blessing to see and be a part of.

Now imagine this same service taking place in a restricted* country. The joy that parents and friends and the applicants experience during their commitments and baptism is tempered with the knowledge that they may very well be giving up

their physical lives as a result. In a restricted country, all Christians know when we chose to follow Christ and join the church that we were potentially signing away our safety and wellbeing. The reality of that cost hasn't hit very close-to-home for us in the Western world. In restricted countries, that reality is every day.

Our faith, in essence, doesn't really cost us much in the society that we live in. There are some who have paid a price for doing the right thing, but many of us could live our whole lives and never fear bodily harm as a result of our choice to follow God. Deborah Samuels could have very easily kept her head down and been quiet about her faith, but even though she knew the dangers of sharing her faith, she did it anyway thus resulting in her martyrdom. We could be free and open about our faith, but we allow ourselves to be intimidated by what others think of us. We worry about what they might say or if they may challenge or question us. Are we as free and open about our faith as we could be? When God asks on Judgment Day, "Why didn't you seek and take opportunities to speak a word for Me?", there will be no excuse. Make time in your busy life to talk boldly about your spiritual-life beliefs.

In Ephesians chapter 6, Paul

addresses the whole armor of God. Most people will tell you that there are six aspects to the armor: Belt of Truth, Breastplate of Righteousness, Boots of Preparation of the Gospel of Peace, Shield of Faith, Helmet of Salvation, and the Sword of the Spirit. If you continue reading that sentence, you will see that prayer is the last piece of the armor of God. Right after prayer, however, Paul mentioned speaking several times. “And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.” (Ephesians 6:19-20). I find it noteworthy that prayer and speaking boldly are mentioned right along with the armor of God. In Hebrew and in Greek culture, repeating something is an indication of importance. It’s not a coincidence. It is an indication of how important it is that we share our faith boldly.

Obviously, we can’t choose where or to whom we are born. What we can choose, however, is how we are going to take advantage of the freedom that we have. We have the freedom to pray without fear of being discovered and persecuted, we can speak out about Christ with minimal pushback in most areas, and

we can openly worship God in peace. With privilege comes responsibility. We have a responsibility to pray for others and to share our faith with boldness—regardless of the cost.

In Gary Miller’s book, *Church Matters*, he brings up a few things I feel apply here. “*It would be foolish for us to assume that the path for the church in our time will be easy, that the true church of our day will calmly glide along, coasting into the harbor on smooth water at the end of time. Those early church leaders warned of storms, rough seas, and potential shipwreck. So what are the challenges of our day? We know God has a purpose for His Church and has provided the power to perform His will. Jesus even promised to be with us to the end. But how might our vision be limiting God?*”¹ Gary has a great point here. Our view of Christianity is being influenced by the non-restrictive society we live in, and our lack of vision is limiting what God will do in our lives.

Praying for our brothers and sisters in restricted nations can renew our vision for witnessing, and break some of the influence society holds over us. By praying for those who are on the “front lines,” we can participate in the fight even if we aren’t present. I was

¹ *Church Matters* by Gary Miller, page 124

recently forwarded a list, distributed by Voice of the Martyrs, of ten things we can pray for our persecuted brothers and sisters:

1. Pray they will sense God's presence (Hebrews 13:5)

2. Pray they will know we are praying for them (2 Timothy 1:3)

3. Pray they will experience God's comfort (2 Thessalonians 2:16-17)

4. Pray they will see God open doors for evangelism (Colossians 4:3)

5. Pray they will boldly share the gospel (Acts 4:29)

6. Pray they will mature in their faith (Colossians 1:28-29)

7. Pray they will be granted wisdom in covert ministry work (Acts 9:23-25)

8. Pray they will remain joyful amid suffering (Acts 5:41)

9. Pray they will be able to forgive and love their persecutors (Matthew 5:44)

10. Pray they will be deeply rooted in God's Word (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

Notice the nature of these requests. They're not for health, material provisions, nice weather, or a productive day at work. We should be challenged to examine our prayer requests and address our casual, affluent self-centeredness.

A quote from David Platt was shared with me, and it sums up this well.

"Why is it necessary to pray? Why do we even ask that question? ... [Because] You don't need prayer when you are watching TV. And we don't need prayer when we're mindlessly surfing the internet. You don't need prayer then. You don't need prayer when there is nothing at stake in your walk with Christ. You don't need prayer when there's no risk in Christianity. You don't need prayer when Christianity consists of a monotonous religious motion of routine. Week in and week out. You don't need prayer for that. You can do that on your own.

*"But, when you risk everything to glorify Jesus Christ—YOU need prayer. When you sacrifice your possessions and your dreams and your hopes and your career and you lay it all on the line and you stake your reputation down on your allegiance to Christ—you NEED prayer. When your longing day-in and day-out is to lead people to faith in Christ—you need PRAYER. You rely on prayer. You are desperate for prayer because you are devoted to His mission. And when the aim of your life is to affect as many people with the Gospel of Christ for the Glory of Christ you will find yourself given over to prayer."*²

2 By David Platt on Prayer, part of a sermon on October 15, 2006, at the Church at Brook Hills

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3 <https://research.lifeway.com/2022/01/28/1-in-7-global-christians-faced-persecution-in-2021/>

In 2015, the world and the Christian community were horrified when 21 Egyptian Christians were kidnapped and then beheaded in Libya by Isis who recorded it and then released the video as a warning to Christianity as a whole. Yet in a recent article Lifeway Research³ cites a statistic stating that every day in 2021, an average of more than 16 believers were killed for following Jesus, but few even take notice. In 2021 Christians in 55 nations suffered for their faith, and

Nigeria and Afghanistan are currently the worst. David Curry, president of Open Doors USA stated, “Every Christian who remains in Afghanistan is either on the run or in hiding.”

It is difficult for us to honestly grasp the cost that so many Christians pay every day to follow Christ. We are blessed to live in a time and place where that price is not exacted like it is elsewhere. However, if things were to change, would we still be as willing to serve God openly? We must try harder to ensure we are not squandering valuable opportunities to speak out for Christ – regardless of the potential repercussions.



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THOUGHT GEMS

A laugh is a smile that burst. MARY WALDRIP

• • • • •

The world always looks brighter from behind a smile.

• • • • •

As a man grows older and wiser, he talks less and says more.

• • • • •

Eyes that look are common. Eyes that see are rare. J. OSWALD SANDERS

• • • • •

The statesman shears the sheep; the politician skins them. AUSTIN O'MALLEY

• • • • •

When success turns a man's head, it leaves him facing in the wrong direction.

• • • • •

Cooperation is doing with a smile what you have to do anyway.

• • • • •

If your mind goes blank, be sure to turn off the sound.

• • • • •

We make a living by what we get—a life by what we give.

• • • • •

He who mistrusts most should be trusted least. GREEK PROVERB

• • • • •

Caution is the eldest child of wisdom. VICTOR HUGO

• • • • •

Tomorrow is usually the busiest day of the year.