



calvary messenger



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

Galatians 6:14

FEBRUARY 2008

Meditation

<i>Sonnet II</i>	1
------------------------	---

Editorial

<i>A Spear and a Carpenter's Square</i>	2
---	---

Reader Response.....	5
----------------------	---

<i>CBS Prayer request</i>	6
---------------------------------	---

The Bottom Line

<i>The Tension of Faith vs. Obedience</i>	7
---	---

<i>Why I Do Not Own Television</i>	9
--	---

<i>Secularism</i>	12
-------------------------	----

The Name of Jesus	12
-------------------------	----

Marriages.....	14
----------------	----

Cradle Roll.....	14
------------------	----

Ordinations	16
-------------------	----

Obituaries	16
------------------	----

Observations	18
--------------------	----

<i>The First or the Second Reason</i>	22
---	----

Announcement	23
--------------------	----

<i>Ministers Meeting Messages</i>	24
---	----

<i>Our Conscience</i>	30
-----------------------------	----

Mission Awareness	31
-------------------------	----

<i>Mission Awareness</i>	31
--------------------------------	----

Helpers at Home	33
-----------------------	----

<i>Cherish the Moment</i>	33
---------------------------------	----

Junior Messages	34
-----------------------	----

<i>Her Prayer</i>	34
-------------------------	----

Youth Messages	35
----------------------	----

<i>Dear Youth</i>	35
-------------------------	----

Thought Gems	back cover
--------------------	------------

February 2008

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.

Calvary Publications, Inc., is a non-profit organization, incorporated in the State of Ohio, for the purpose of sponsoring, publishing, and distributing Christian literature. The board is elected, one member annually, by the ministers of the Beachy Amish Mennonite Churches, at their annual spring meeting.

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Material for *Calvary Messenger*, marriages, births, ordinations, obituaries, and general articles—send to the *Editor*. Other Material—mail to their respective *Editors*.

Subscriptions, renewals, changes of address, etc.—mail to **Circulation Manager**. **When you move**, please notify the Circulation Manager one month in advance, giving your old and new address in full, so that your mailing label can be properly corrected and your credit kept in order.

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Calvary Messenger (USPS 767-160) is published monthly by Calvary Publications, 2673 TR 421, Sugarcreek, Ohio 44681. Subscription rates are: 1 year (U.S.) \$8.50, 3 years (U.S.) \$24.00. For congregations using the every-home-plan, \$6.00 per year to individual addresses. Renewal \$3.75 when you also give a 1-year gift subscription at \$3.75. Second class postage at Sugarcreek, Ohio. Postmaster: Send address changes to Calvary Publications, Inc., 11095 Pleasant Hill Rd. NW, Dundee, OH 44624.

Sonnet II

Leon Troyer, Bourbon, IN/Guys Mills, PA

O God, my prayers are feeble, weak and cold,
My pleas half-hearted, like my saltless tears
Which insincerely fall; I would be bold
But falter in the face of all my fears.

O, God, my heart is stony. It receives
None of your grace, Lord. Let your Spirit speak
And break my heart of stone. My heart believes
But how my flesh resists; my flesh is weak.
I am not yielded. Bind me; make me still.
Then smelt me, Lord, and burn the worthless dross
Refine again, again, again, until
I melt, and purer count all else as loss.

God make me brave and true, and give me grace.

Perfect my heart till it reflects Your face.

A Spear and a Carpenter's Square

The Apostle Thomas often gets short-changed. To some people, he's just "Doubting Thomas." One even called him "The Palestinian from Missouri," because after Jesus' reported resurrection, he seemed to say, "You gotta **show me!** I don't believe Jesus is alive unless I see Him and touch His marks of torture!" Some of his comments were pessimistic and bewildered—even skeptical. Thomas was slow to embrace God-honoring faith, but that's a fairly common human tendency. We probably all face doubt, at times.

Let's give Thomas the credit he deserves. He wasn't gullible. He was cautious. He looked for logical cause and effect. That's good. Eventually, as he cooperated with Jesus, he was set free him from his overdose of negative, faith-paralyzing attitudes.

We are given only three "windows," all of them in John's Gospel, through which we may observe Thomas:

In John 11, when Jesus wanted to go back to Judea to be with the family of Lazarus, his disciples warned Jesus, reminding Him that on a previous visit, He was the center of a

manhunt in which his pursuers had murder on their minds. Jesus seems to have brushed that warning aside with the assurance that he who walks with noble purpose and does what God asks of him, need not dodge enemies.

Such courageous talk was too much for Thomas. He scornfully suggested to the other disciples, "Let's go to Judea with Jesus and die with Him." Thomas was not expressing a suicide wish. He was pessimistic. His comment seemed to end the discussion.

After that, they all went on to Bethany where Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead. That should have opened Thomas' eyes, but apparently it didn't.

In John 14, Jesus proceeded to prepare his disciples for his departure. It was a very difficult time for his disciples. Jesus offered them comfort and encouragement with, "Let not your heart be troubled...." He spoke of going away, but He also promised to send the Holy Spirit to comfort them.

Jesus' talk of leaving them disturbed Thomas. He seemed to try to stop

Jesus with this bewildered question: “Lord, we don’t know where you are going, so how can we know the way?” **Man’s extremity is God’s opportunity** and Jesus’ response reflected this truth as He made one of his most-treasured statements, **“I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me. If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well....”** (NKJV) We hear no further comment from Thomas.

In John 20, after Jesus’ crucifixion, Mary Magdalene found Jesus’ tomb empty. After she told Peter and John about it, they also went to the tomb and found it empty. That evening, ten of the disciples got together to decide what to do in light of Jesus’ death, to say nothing of the death of their fond hopes for an earthly kingdom.

Thomas did not come to their meeting. After all, Jesus had warned them only a few days before that what His persecutors do “in a green tree,” they would also do “in the dry” (Luke 23:31). That statement indicated that Jesus’ apostles could not look forward to an easy life. Thomas was not impressed or enthused. He seemed to think, *I’ve had enough! This Jesus of Nazareth was just another poor, mistaken soul who thought He was Messiah, like Theudas and Judas.* (See Acts 5:36,37) When the other

disciples met, perhaps Thomas thought, *It is stupid to gather in one place. It makes us easy targets for mass arrest and even torture!*

While Thomas was hanging back and nursing his doubts, Jesus came to the other ten disciples who likely spoke in whispers as they huddled in secret. Jesus blessed them as He invited them to note his resurrected body. He breathed on them and told them to receive the Holy Spirit, Who would soon make His appearance in Jerusalem.

When Thomas was told about Jesus’ visit, he wasn’t convinced. I think he felt smug that he wasn’t so gullible as to be fooled by such an excited report. He declared that unless he actually saw Jesus and touched the nail prints in his hands and the spear mark in his side, he would not believe that Jesus had risen from the dead. A week later, Jesus gave Thomas opportunity to make good his brazen challenge. When Thomas touched the resurrected body of Jesus, his sinful defenses apparently completely vanished as he exclaimed, **“My Lord and my God!”**

The biblical record includes no more about Thomas, but *Martyr’s Mirror* (page 89) indicates that Thomas’ foot-dragging was permanently left behind in that well-known confession and testimony after he physically touched

his risen Lord. Thomas' life from that point on was no longer characterized by pessimism, bewilderment, or skepticism. He was just as sure of Jesus' absolute trustworthiness as the other apostles were. His heart was transformed and made perfect toward God. (2 Chronicles 16:9)

Some years later, Thomas took the Gospel to India. There he erected a church with his own hands. With God's help, he vigorously opposed sun worship. This incurred the wrath of those who worshiped the sun. As a result of his actions, Thomas was sentenced first to be tortured with red hot plates, then to be cast into a glowing furnace. When the fire did not quickly kill him, his persecutors thrust a lance into his side so that he died. Thus God allowed Thomas' body to be pierced much like Jesus' body was.

Even today, among Christian believers in India, the symbols of the Apostle Thomas are a spear and a carpenter's square.

Lessons from Thomas

It's not wrong to be cautious. It is prudent to try the spirits, but it is not good to put a question mark where

God has put a period. When Thomas' negativism and unbelief had been replaced with sincere repentance and faith, Jesus assured him with, “Thomas, because you have seen me, you have believed; **blessed are those who have not seen yet have believed”** (John 20:29 NKJV). For the old Thomas, it seems to have been, *Seeing is believing*, but for you and me it must be, *Believing so we can see*.

Yes, we should try the spirits. No, it's not a shame to have questions, but it is a shame if we don't let the Lord Jesus through God's Word answer our questions!

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We wish to inform our readers that our publication board has approved a subscription price increase to offset some of the higher cost of producing *Calvary Messenger*. The price for one year has been raised to \$8.50 and for three-years to \$24. While this increase will not cover all our costs, it will help so that we will require less other subsidizing income. We appreciate the financial help you have given in recent weeks. May God bless you! —PLM



Patience and understanding bring contentment.

reader response

Re: Uncertain Sounds, (Nov., 2007, p. 25.)

My wife and I both find it very disappointing to observe how easily some of our people lay aside their identity with God's people and adopt the world's symbols of identity. It seems that folks remove some of our most defining elements of identity in an effort to stop identifying with a group of people, never realizing that identity is not something you can remove. You can only replace it with different allegiance. History teaches us that if we do not take an active role in selecting elements that define our identity, someone else will happily do it for us. There should be no one more qualified to speak to issues of identity than the church.

Sanford Yoder, Partridge, KS

• • • • •

Dear Bro. Paul.

I want to thank and commend you for your writing in *Calvary Messenger*, especially "Uncertain Sounds...." You have my support and prayers. We all must stand for the truth. May God bless you.

With love,

Amos C. Yoder, Thomas, OK

Re: "What If?..." (Dec., '07. p. 1)

Thank you very much for the inspirational poem, "What If?"

I am the widow of Bro. J. Otis

Yoder, [founder of Heralds of Hope] who was the faithful to the Word of God. We felt we would have been happy to be a part of your fellowship. Bro. Ervin Hershberger was one of our dear friends. We want you to know we have enjoyed *Calvary Messenger*, probably from its birth. Please accept the enclosed gift as a part of my birthday gift to Jesus....

Faithfully facing the future,

Isabelle K. Yoder, Seaford, VA

Re: "The New Conservatives" (Dec., 07, p. 4)

"*The New Conservatives*" ought to be cause for concern in every point. For brevity, I shall focus on but one: "Static, tradition-based nonconformity" is displaced by "an active counterculture lifestyle." According to the context, this counterculture pursuit spells the end of group dynamics of separation (and cannot be dictated). Apparently it is to be replaced by individualistic, "Christ-inspired" applications of choice. So much for making objective, practical applications from Bible principle [as a brotherhood].

Hold it a minute. Anyone can be counter-cultural. The counterculture movement of our day seems to have its beginnings with Elvis Presley, the Beatles, and the hippie movement of the 60's. There was also the rise of Marxism on university campuses, and

various anti-war voices including the pro-communist singers, Peter, Paul and Mary. This brand of pacifism spread even into liberal Mennonitism, doubtless as a “Christ-inspired, counter-culture position” (in their minds). The present counterculture movement is the ongoing mind-altering drugs/worldly music/anti-authority, all-in-one machine. Counter-culture movements have one thing in common. They are a downward, destabilizing force in society.

And no, biblical nonconformity is not the same as personal, subjective, “Christ-inspired” posturing. Biblical nonconformity is not the realm of the individualist, but that of Christian brotherhood. It does not actively seek anti-cultural positions. It merely seeks the best and safest applications of biblical principle for the long haul. It is traditional because it

remains a guiding force through winds of change. It shelters the young and inexperienced in the folds of mature vision and experience. It is the appropriate packaging of the meek and lowly. Far from a destabilizing force, such a biblical separation and non-conformity provides moral challenge and uplift. It is the city set on a hill. It is salt and light in a culture adrift. It has high impact toward righteousness (as seen in the media attention to the Amish school shootings).

*Though far from perfect, my best guess is that “static, traditional nonconformity” will still be a witness in the world after these new attempts have dissipated. “The New Conservatism” has tremendous appeal and sounds so spiritual. Who would want to be against it? Perhaps we would do well to call it what it is: *The New Liberalism.**

Lester Troyer, Stone Lake, WI 

PRAY for CALVARY BIBLE SCHOOL!

By the time this request reaches you, second term will be in full swing.

You may join us by praying for CBS.

- Pray that Bible School would be a joyous time of spiritual growth and eternal blessing.
- Pray for a holy, refreshing revival.
- Pray for a hunger and thirst for the Word of God.
- Pray for love and unity among the administration, staff, faculty, cooks and students.
- Pray that Jesus Christ be glorified and that God's people rejoice in Him.

Yours in the Calvary tie,

Floyd Stoltzfus

Principal



The Tension of Faith vs. Obedience— Part One of Two

Aaron Lapp, Kinzers, PA

Somehow the idea that faith is superior to obedience seems to be fairly firmly established in our midst. Faith seems to have gained the upper hand in preaching, teaching and witnessing. So much so, that by now it even seems as though they are against each other. This is most unfortunate.

Faith is held high in the Old Testament and verified in the New Testament. Obedience is held equally high in both testaments. It is not true to Scripture to say that obedience was primarily important in the Old Testament and that faith is paramount in the New Testament. Never have faith and obedience been in opposition to or competition with each other.

Good works and obedience are not in every instance synonymous. Maybe that is where we stumble. The good works which God endorses arise either out of our faith, or out of our obedience. More likely, they arise from a combination of both.

Some good works are repulsive to God. Those good works done in an attempt to gain favor with God or to

try to place Him in our debt are not acceptable to God. Then there are good works done to impress people. Man's good works are sometimes done to impress others, to make them debtors, or for recognition or applause.

These two classes are referred to in Jesus' remarkable Sermon on the Mount. In Matthew 7:13-29, Jesus teaches about a number of two's: two gates, two ways, two kinds of fruit, two kinds of trees, two sets of works, two foundations, and two houses. These pairs all relate to the same idea: There is a life with works that is acceptable to God. There is also a life that is rejected--with eternal consequences. *Choosing* the right path, *bearing* the right fruit, and *doing* the right works are all integrally connected. The internal condition precedes the external result.

The commandments of God and faith toward Him run on parallel tracks. As such, they are inseparable. The one cannot fully function without the other. God's commandments come from his holiness and righteousness, his mercy

and grace, his judgment and wrath, his goodness and truth. All of God's attributes rise in support of all his precepts, laws and commandments.

Faith itself is a commandment of God. Even the basic response to believe on the Lord Jesus is commanded. "And this is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his son Jesus Christ..." (1 John 3:23). We conclude that God's call to obey his commandments rise higher than his call to faith itself.

Faith is recognized *when* and *as* the commandments are obeyed and followed, specifically. A classic Bible exhibit for this is clearly given in Hebrews 11. In each instance, the persons cited for their faith were also noted for their obedience. Obedience demonstrates faith.

The ascending rise in holiness and righteousness receives its thrust from a literal obedience to God's Word. That was what gave the dynamic to the original Anabaptists. A modern-day Anabaptist, Ed Kane, long-time member at Weavertown Church, taught a class on Anabaptist backgrounds. He said the original Anabaptists began a serious Bible study. When they read the specific

teachings of Jesus, they would say to each other, "Why don't we just do it?" Their sincere, simple and literal obedience was the genius of their new-found power and witness. Their obedience sprang forth with much confidence and joy from a genuine faith.

The great spiritual awakenings and revivals of the 1800's and on through the middle of the last century were noted for their renewed commitment to obedience, springing from a new level of faith. Furthermore, their heartfelt and pure obedience to God's holy Word brought about an unmistakable change of life.

Any lasting revival in our time, either by an individual or a community, results in a new obedience to God's commandments. Faith will follow, or rather, be on a parallel track that runs right alongside.

The Bottom Line is that obedience to God and his Word need additional attention, even among us. We are not attempting to lower the call to faith, and certainly not to discredit it in any way. Rather, the burden is to rethink and look anew at the high place that God's call to obedience has in God's Word.



The chief reward for idleness is poverty.

Why I Do Not Own Television

Dale R. Eby, Dundee, NY

What one sets before his eyes impacts the way he lives. What goes in the eyegate and the eargate affects what we think, what we ponder on, and finally, even the course of life.

It is with this belief that the church wisely takes a position about viewing and owning television. Deuteronomy 7:26 says, “Neither shalt thou bring an abomination into thine house, lest thou be a cursed thing like it: but thou shalt utterly detest it, and thou shalt utterly abhor it; for it is a cursed thing.” This passage refers to the idols of the heathen, yet it challenges and warns us about what we bring into our homes.

When television was invented, it was impossible to see how it would influence society. Now we can see how drastically it has changed society. I see TV as an abomination, a curse. Let me share with you four reasons why I refuse to own or use television:

The consumption of time. My date book shows plenty of good and godly things I want to and should do, as God gives life. When I read verses like Ephesians 5:15,16, “See then that ye walk circumspectly,

not as fools but as wise, Redeeming the time, because the days are evil,” I cannot help but realize the use of time is important. Television has become more than a way to relax. It has become an addictive instrument and one of mankind’s biggest time wasters, as someone noted, “Most of man’s inventions have been time savers—then came television.” We are given only so much time each day. We decide how we use it.

“Preachers, deacons, S. S. teachers, and others have lost their appetite for God and His Word due to the time spent with television.” (source unknown) I recall reading in the *Dundee Observer*, our local newspaper, that April 24-30, 1997, was being declared National TV Turnoff Week. If our society sees that television has become an obsession and a time waster, how much more should we as people of the light avoid it!

The passivity it creates in its viewers. To be passive is to accept without objection or resistance. When a person is bombarded with information at a high rate of speed, it is nearly impossible to properly evaluate everything. Television’s

success comes largely from its ability to lull the viewer into passivity. Without time for meditation on what one sees and hears, one finds his life guided by externals rather than by internals and the Holy Spirit's still, small voice. The Bible instructs us to make judgment calls, to stand against the evil tide, to be other than passive people. 1 Corinthians 2:15 states, "...he that is spiritual judgeth all things..." An active, discerning mind is a God-given safety device.

The God-defying content that dominates the media. In Falls Church, VA, PTA members kept their eyes fixed on television programs through the hours children would commonly be viewing them. They observed 185 programs for 114.5 hours, saw 281 assaults, 117 killings, 19 robberies, 16 kidnappings, 10 murder conspiracies, 3 arsons, 3 extortions, 3 jailbreaks, 1 lynching, 1 bombing, and 1 suicide. Prejudices; stereotypes; disrespect for the elderly; leaders and parents; sexual promiscuity; fantasy; and drug and alcohol abuse were presented as the acceptable norm.

The commercials and the news also carry this objectionable content. The Bible strictly tells us to turn from these harmful things and to turn to what is true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report. (Phil. 4:8) We

will not succeed in achieving God's spiritual goals if we fill our minds with foul content. If we allow our "mindset" to shift to this pastime, it will surely affect our "heartset." Proverbs 4:23 says, "Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life."

The health and social impact for the viewer. "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are" (1 Corinthians 3:16,17). A unique experiment was conducted at the University of Alberta. Twenty chickens were exposed to TV 24 hours a day for two and a half months. The chickens got blind, so they staggered and wandered about in a daze. Mrs. Jean Luber, a professor of zoology at the university, found that the chickens, when exposed to continual televiwing, developed glaucoma, a hardening of the eyeball which often results in blindness.

According to one of Spain's leading pediatricians, television is damaging the brain cells of millions of children throughout the world. The sight modulation of most children under the age of five is not equipped to cope with the dazzling brightness and vibrations of television programming.

Tests have shown that a child's brain cells and vision can be permanently impaired if he is exposed to television at an early age. It is said that the damage to the cells is both structural and chemical. The changes these cells undergo negatively affect the child's normal intellectual development.

The Washington Times interviewed Michael Medved, author of *Hollywood vs. America*, reported that he believes television teaches people to be impatient, restless, dissatisfied, and depressed. Clearly, television impacts the health of the populace.

Michael Medved reports that the largest portion of people's free hours is spent in watching television, so social interaction rates lower than this chosen pastime. Work and school are typically less important than watching television for many school age children and youth. God has made us social beings. We are in need of encouragement, instruction, and the balance we receive from others. While it may be easier to be passive and let others think for you, is that fulfilling the purposes we are created for? Healthy interaction with others is the primary way we discover the world God has made and learn

how to deal with people, God's most-loved creation.

Heavy television watchers are likely not doing the following activities very well, according to The American Academy of Pediatrics:

1. Asking questions
 2. Solving problems
 3. Being creative
 4. Exercising initiative
 5. Practicing communication skills
 6. Playing interactive games with other children or adults (helpful for developing patience, self-control, cooperation, and sportsmanship)
- from "Caring for Your School-Age Child"

Communicating the Gospel of Jesus Christ successfully calls for social skills, creativity, and for much initiative. We have a job to do and we must do it with all our might. We cannot afford to let the god of television keep us from it.

This evil influence is a curse, an abomination; if we submit to the bondage of television we will become more like the world than like our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. I cannot afford the price of television. Can you?



Revenge is the hollowest victory in all the world.

Secularism

In the twentieth century, the secularists, still living off the benefits of Christianity, often chided Christians for having invented the term “secularist,” a term which, they said, was devoid of meaning. Their leaders knew very well, however, that secularism (like any other parasite) derives its sustenance from the object on which it feeds, and so they were rather pleased when milquetoast Christians timidly offered, as a definition of secularism, “living as though God did not exist.”

What Christians should have called

it rather was, “a contemptibly fraudulent way of living ‘on the cheap,’ by reaping the maximum fruits of Christian effort, while contributing the minimum effort of your own.” When secularists accused Christians of “living *in* the past,” Christians ought to have responded by pointing out that secularists were “living *off* the past.”

[Excerpted and edited from, *From a Christian Ghetto*, by Geddes MacGregor (1900-1998). Submitted by LeRoy Whitman, Wycliffe Bible Translators, Mitla, Oaxaca, Mexico.] 

The Name of Jesus

Suzie Oatney, Partridge, KS

Recently, in Sunday School, we studied the book of Revelation. One thing that jumped out at me was the wonder of the name of Jesus. In Revelation 19:12, it says, “His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns, and he had **a name written that no man knew, but he himself.**” Note also this verse, Revelation 2:17, “He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone **a**

new name written, which no man knoweth SAVING HE THAT RECEIVETH IT?

When Brent and I became engaged, we were not Christians. I told him that I would marry him, but that I did not want to take his name; I wanted to keep my maiden name. He told me he felt his name was the most important thing he had and he wanted to give it to me. I had not anticipated him feeling so strongly about it. I don’t remember discussing it again, but when we were married, I became Mrs. Brent Oatney. Since we

have become Christians, marriage has become more than just a legal arrangement for living together. In taking my husband's name as his bride, I have become aware of who he is; who his parents are, those he is related to, and much that lends itself to his person, calling, and interests in life. It has also distanced me, in a sense, from my earthly parents.

I believe this is also true of the Bride of Christ. When we take the name of Jesus and are not ashamed to set aside who we were and take on the calling of the Christian, we exchange our parentage from that of the earthly Adam to that of the Father, God. We relate to a different family and want to become a part of the church, the Bride of Christ. We embrace her values and her calling on earth.

A larger picture, however, includes that fulfillment when Christ returns for His Bride and gives her

his name. That is the name ***which no man knoweth saving him that receiveth it.***

What a day that will be when Jesus, the Son of the living God, returns and gives us HIS NAME! We have already received the parentage of God Himself, but in that day we will understand many things we are now not capable of understanding about our great, triune God, who is omnipotent, omnipresent and eternal!

I am humbled to think that God wants me to have his name—the name above all other names and to which every knee shall bow. This new name that we will be given requires that we are willing to receive it. I cannot comprehend all that I would be missing now and when Christ returns if I were not willing to take his name.

“Even so, come, Lord Jesus.”



At no time is self-control more difficult
than in a time of great success.

m a r r i a g e s

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

Byler-Yoder

Bro. Lavern, son of Ray and Elva Byler, Whiteville, TN, and Sis. Cheryl, daughter of Floyd and Betty Yoder, Clarkson, KY, at Church of Joy for Cedar Springs A.M. Church, on Nov. 30, 2007, by Jim Yoder.

Coblentz-Helmuth

Bro. Jonathan, son of Andy and Clara Mae Coblentz, Millwood, KY, and Sis. Loretta, daughter of Glen and Rosanna Helmuth, Belvidere, TN, at Church of Christ for Belvidere Mennonite, on Nov. 9, 2007, by Stephen Beachy.

Smucker-Yoder

Bro. Marlin David, son of Dan and Anna Smucker, Narvon, PA, and Sis. Glanette Joyce, daughter of E. Ray and Gladys Yoder, Cedar Creek, TX, at Bastrop Church of Christ for Grace Mennonite Fellowship Nov. 2, 2007, by the bride's father.

Stauffer-Schmucker

Bro. Roger Neil, son of Esther and the late Roger Stauffer, Sturgis, MI, and Sis. Phyllis Elaine, daughter of John and Tillie Schmucker, Franklin, KY, on Oct. 27, 2007, at Calvary Chapel for Pilgrim Fellowship, by John Miller.

Yoder-Burkholder

Bro. Andrew, son of Anna and the late Levi Yoder, Shipshewana, IN, and Sis. Rachel, daughter of Manas and Mabel Burkholder, Shipshewana, IN, at Calvary Chapel for Rosewood Fellowship on Dec. 22, 2007, by Glenn Yoder.

Yoder-Mast

Bro. Eli, son of Abie and Jemima Yoder, LaGrange, IN, and Sis. Judy, daughter of John and Mahala Mast, Crossville, TN, at Dripping Springs Baptist Church for Mr. Moriah Mennonite Church, on Nov. 10, 2007, by John Mast.

c r a d l e r o l l

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

Byler, John and Barbara (Erb), Brunner, ON, third child and son, Jared Michael, Dec. 2, 2007.

Caceres, Adonay and Leona (Miller), Sierra Madré Mission, Mexico, seventh child, third son, Mervin David, Dec. 16, 2007.

Jantzi, Arnold and Rosemary (Wagler), Wellesley, ON, tenth child, fifth dau., Sara Elaine, Nov. 4, 2007.

Kauffman, J. Timothy and Ruth (Peachey), Reedsville, PA, eighth child, third dau., Rosina Grace, Nov. 17, 2007.

Mast, Brian and Mary Jane (King), Pulaski, TN, third child, second son, Javon André, Nov. 3, 2007.

Miller, Devon and Mary Sue (Garber), Brookfield, MO, second child, first son, Brandon Ray, Nov. 6, 2007.

Miller, Timothy and Esther (Oatney), Hutchinson, KS, second child and dau., Arianna Estella, Dec. 25, 2007.

Shirk, Orion and Lynnelle (Horst), Philadelphia, PA, second child and dau., Skye Arlea, Dec. 7, 2007.

Sommers, Jonathan and Twila (Zook), Hiddenite, NC, fourth child, second son, Lucas Jon, Dec. 19, 2007.

Stoltzfus, Michael and Linda (Huyard), New Holland, PA, eighth child, sixth son, Joshua David, Nov. 17, 2007.

Stoltzfus, Steve and Linda (Fisher), Bridgeton, NJ, fifth and sixth children, third and fourth sons (one son deceased), Nathaniel Ray, Aug. 6, 2003; Wade Eugene, Jan. 18, 2005, received for adoption Nov. 7, 2007.

Stutzman, Owen and Wanda (Greenauer), Hutchinson, KS, second child and son, Isaiah Lee, Dec. 9, 2007.

Summy, Eldon and Sonya (Hostetler), Rochelle, VA, third child, second son, Donovan Ray, Dec. 6, 2007.

Troyer, David Dean and Rhoda (Beiler), Leesburg, OH, third child and son, Jeffrey Omar, Nov. 12, 2007.

Troyer, Jerry and Jana Le (Miller), Millersburg, OH, second child, first son, Seth Christian, Dec. 17, 2007.

Wagler, Lynford and Theresa (Wagler), Montgomery, IN, fifth child, second son, Aaron Dale, Nov. 28, 2007.

Wagler, Matthew and Erma Jean (Miller), Odon, IN, second child, first son, Alex Matthew, Nov. 20, 2007.

Yoder, Eric and Linda (Glick), Knotts Island, NC, first child and son, Roland Eric, Nov. 28, 2007.

Yoder, Jadon and Bethanie (Hochstetler), Hicksville, OH, second child, first dau., Trista Beth, Oct. 15, 2007.

Yoder, M. Jeremy and Lois (Beachy), McVeytown, PA, first living child and son, (one dau. stillborn), Zachary Marlin, Dec. 18, 2007.

Yoder, Jonathan and Joyce (Miller), Dunmore East, Co. Waterford, Ireland, third child, first dau., Jocelyn Rose, Dec. 9, 2007.



ordinations

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

Bro. John Beiler, 39, Wytheville, VA, was ordained as minister on Dec. 16, 2007, for Light of Hope Christian Fellowship, Wytheville, VA. Preordination messages were brought by Ivan Beachy. The first message on Sunday evening was brought by Manfred McGrath. The charge was given by Bennie Byler, assisted by Ivan Beachy. Also in the lot was Phineas Kauffman.

Bro. Anthony Miller, 34, was called by voice of the church and ordained as minister at Dayspring Christian Fellowship, Taylorsville, NC, on Oct. 13, 2007. Preordination messages were brought by Johnny Miller, Minerva, OH. The charge was given by Virgil Kanagy, Blackville, SC. Ernest Hochstetler, Abbeville, SC, brought a message in the ordination service.

Bro. J. Mark Miller, 46, Leesburg, OH, was ordained as minister for Faith and Light Mennonite Church, Leesburg, on Oct. 28, 2007. Preordination messages were brought by Homer Zook and Paul Weaver. The charge was given by Perry Troyer, assisted by Homer Zook and Elmer Stoltzfus. Also in the lot were J. Omar Beiler and David Dean Troyer.

Bro. Ben A. Stoltzfus, 41, Morgantown, PA, was ordained as bishop at Pequea A.M. Church, Narvon, PA, on Oct. 28, 2007. Preordination messages were brought by Raymond King. The charge was given by Jonathan S. Stoltzfus, assisted by John Glick and John Lapp. Melvin Zook was also in the lot.

Bro. Marlin Yoder, 26, Cedar Creek, TX, was chosen by voice of the church and ordained as an elder at Grace Mennonite Fellowship, Bastrop, TX, on December 16, 2007. Preordination messages were brought by Ernest Strubhar, Perkins, OK. The charge was given by Reuben Kaufman, assisted by the local ministerial team.

obituaries

Bontrager, Susan A. (Miller), 102, died in Goshen, IN, on Nov. 18, 2007. She was born April 18, 1905, daughter of the late Andrew and Catherine (Yoder) Miller in LaGrange County, IN.

She was a member of Fair Haven Amish Mennonite Church, Goshen.

On March 26, 1926, she was married to Jacob E. Bontrager, who is deceased. Survivors include five children; 24 grandchildren; 41 great grandchildren and two great great grandchildren. Children are: Fannie Hochstetler, Goshen; Lydia (Clarence) Bontrager, Etna Green; Katie Mae Bontrager; Albert J. Bontrager, Baldwin, MI; and one daughter-in-law, Mary Bontrager, Nappanee.

She was preceded in death by a son, Eli; two brothers-in-law, John and Noah Miller; two sisters, Polly Overholt and Lydia Ann Bontrager.

The funeral was held on Nov. 21, with Wilbur Yoder serving. Burial was in the Thomas Cemetery.

Ebersole, Barbara L., 93, died in Lancaster General hospital, on Nov. 23, 2007, from the effects of a stroke. She was born in Leacock Twp, Intercourse, PA, daughter of the late David and Katie (Lapp) King.

She was a member of Weavertown A.M. Church, Bird-in-Hand, PA.

On Dec. 22, 1932, she was married to Jacob Ebersole, who died in 1971.

Survivors include one brother: Abram King; three sisters: Fannie, wife of Alvin King, Honey Brook; Savilla, widow of Jonas Zook, Paradise; Susie, wife of Allen Kauffman, Loysville; and a number of nieces and nephews.

Preceding her in death were an infant son and daughter; two brothers: Christian King and Isaac King; and two sisters: Lydia King and Annie King.

The funeral was held on Nov. 27, with Aaron Lapp, Raymond King, and Norman Kauffman serving. Burial was in the Myers Cemetery.

Miller, Lena, 86, of Stuarts Draft, VA, died Nov. 7, 2007 at her residence. She was born in Belleville, PA, May 6, 1921,

daughter of the late Joseph and Fannie (Yoder) Byler. She was the last surviving member of her family of five girls, all of whom died of congestive heart failure.

She was a member of Pilgrim Christian Fellowship.

Lena is preceded in death by her two husbands, David C. Yoder, age 37; and Uriel E. Miller, age 76; four sisters; an infant son, Joseph; one son-in-law, Andy N. Troyer; and a granddaughter, Julia (Troyer) Beachy.

Survivors include three daughters: Anna Mary (Bennie) Byler and Tina (Thomas) Swarey, both of Stuarts Draft; Mrs. Elsie Troyer, Olney, IL; and one son, J. Robert "Bob" (Nancy) Yoder, Royston, VA; three step children: Thomas (Gloria) Miller, Christiana, PA; Melvin (Lavina) Miller, Tomah, WI; Mary Ellen (Ervin) Wagler, Renick, WV; 21 grandchildren, 49 great grandchildren; 15 step grandchildren; and eight step great grandchildren.

The funeral was held at Pilgrim Christian Fellowship on Nov. 9, with Elmer Schrock and Ken Miller serving. Duane Weaver conducted the committal at the interment in the Mt. Zion A.M. Cemetery, where she was buried beside her first husband.

Stutzman, Rhoda (Yoder), 82, died of cancer Dec. 11, 2007, at Constantine, MI. She was born Aug. 21, 1925, daughter

of the late John and Mary (Bontrager) Yoder, at Jump River, WI.

She was a member of Pilgrim Fellowship, Nottawa, MI.

On Nov. 30, 1944, she was married to Andrew J. Stutzman, who survives. Also surviving are children: Edith (Ray) Yoder, Centreville, MI; Tillie (John) Schmucker, Franklin, KY; Albert (Sarah) Stutzman, White Pigeon, MI; Ray (Martha) Stutzman, Lakeville, IN; and daughter-in-law, Susan (Yost) Miller,

Goshen, IN; 19 grandchildren, 33 great grandchildren, four step grandchildren and 12 step great grandchildren. Other survivors include two sisters, Ann Grinnell, Waterloo, IA; and Fannie Miller, Kalona, IA.

Preceding her in death was a son, Alvin Stutzman.

The funeral was held at Calvary Chapel on Dec. 14, with John Miller and Paul Yoder serving. Burial was in Pilgrim Fellowship Cemetery.



observations

Sometimes it seems that the enemy is intensifying his efforts to attack the church. It occurs to me that there are at least three ways in which this happens.

1. It is possible to be very obedient to a certain lifestyle that is different from cultural mainstream, without walking in newness of life. If church guidelines are our only reason for being different it is doubtful that such convictions would survive serious testing. To understand and internalize biblical principle behind practice is essential.

2. A second enemy tactic is for congregations to make small changes without considering the bigger picture. We are not called to judge contemporary culture. It is not judgmental, however, to acknowledge that we need to be as different from the world as the world is different from the Bible.

This implies a willingness to be identified with the people of God in a recognizable identity. To make small changes without considering the bigger picture and the long-term implications can lead us where we do not want to go.

3. A third method the enemy is using with increasing frequency is that of confusion, contention, conflict and ill will. Let us remember that God is not the author of confusion but of peace. Failure to get along well together and to truly love one another is not evidence of faithful Christianity. Onlookers can rightly question whether or not we are His disciples. Such problems will not be solved by finger pointing. A willingness to humble ourselves in honest self-searching before God is evidence of really wanting God's blessing more than we want our own way. Having said all that, let us be

reminded that Christ is still building His church. Let us be numbered with those whose lives reflect the grace of Christ in how we relate to others.

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North American Anabaptists still have one thing in common: Their official position is against participation in the military.

World War II provided vivid reminders that an official position may not be the deciding factor in a popular war. It is obvious that the greater the degree of acculturation (becoming like the culture around us) the greater the support for participating in a war. One congregation that was Amish before 1900 provides interesting and instructive information to willing learners.

In spite of the church's position about half of the young men in this church chose military service, even though there was government provision for alternative service. In 1945, this church issued a statement that would have required returning service men to sign a statement professing their belief in the peace principles taught and practiced by the Mennonite Church and expressing their regret for their military service before they would be allowed back into full membership. Few of the returning service men were willing to sign the statement. In 1955, they changed their position and welcomed all who had served their country in that way into full fellowship.

To be inclusive is commendable,

but to make it unconditional violates Scripture.

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Our local newspaper editor notes that rickets is making a comeback in our country. This was relatively common in earlier U.S. history and is still fairly common in some developing countries. Doctors and scientists say it is caused by not enough milk, sunshine, and exercise. Soft drinks, snacks, and television seem to go together. They do not add up to nutrition and good health.

Television aside, how does one justify the liberal intake of soft drinks from the standpoint of being healthy or financially justifiable?

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Russell Steen, local columnist, gives his experience in a discount store with his 13-year-old daughter. The mother and daughter had complained how difficult it was to find decent clothing for young girls.

Dad Steen was shocked and angered by what he found. Clothing design was clearly immodest. Often there were written messages that were vulgar and/or sexually explicit.

In the book area there was a section that contained hard-core pornography, without any warning labels. When it was called to the attention of a female employee, who then called the manager, both were very embarrassed. Contents of the movie section and the "kids' section" held essentially the same sex-saturated flavor.

As far as I know, Russell Steen is not an Anabaptist. Certainly, he is not an Amish Mennonite. But his comments do remind us that the church needs to model modesty and decency in a social climate that is often hostile to and neglectful of such values.

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The same column includes a quote from Alexander Solzhenitsyn, who spoke to a graduating class at Harvard in 1978. He won the Nobel Prize for having the courage to expose the atrocities of the Soviet Gulag system. He also had the courage to criticize Western culture as follows: “Destructive and irresponsible freedom has been granted boundless space. Society appears to have little defense against the abyss of human decadence...for example, misuse of liberty for moral violence against young people, motion pictures full of crime and horror. It is considered to be a part of freedom that young people do not need to look at or accept.” He describes the effects as “the corrosion of evil.” His talk at Harvard included an appeal to the West to repent. *The New York Times* dismissed Solzhenitsyn as a fanatic. An invitation to speak at the White House was cancelled. Steen believes that Solzhenitsyn should be required reading. He says, “Understanding the truth of history would cure our indifference to creeping socialism.”

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“Courageous Nonviolence” is the title of an article by Ron Sider

in *Christianity Today* (12-07). He says it is estimated that 86 million people died in wars from 1900 to 1989. This would come to 2,500 per day or 100 per hour for 90 years. In addition, another approximate 120 million were killed by government-sponsored mass killings. The Soviet Union and China seem to account for more than half of that number.

He says, “It is ironic that the 20th century also produced numerous and stunningly successful examples of nonviolent victories over injustice and oppression.” Gandhi in India liberated India from British rule with an army that included 50,000 unarmed soldiers, now recognized as the same people making up the Taliban. Resistance to Communism in Poland is also mentioned as a nonviolent success story. Martin Luther King, Jr., is seen as having modeled his campaign for racial justice after Gandhi’s example.

While we believe in Christian nonresistance, it could be argued that there may be secular reasons that nonviolence is more effective than armed conflict.

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I was surprised to learn that some communities in Britain are experiencing an alarming increase in birth defects. This is apparently traceable to the common practice of first-cousin marriages. In Bradford, more than 75% of all marriages of Pakistani descent are believed to be such marriages. This has resulted

in a dramatic increase in the rate of genetic defects and infant mortality. More than 140 different recessive disorders have been identified. This compares with the national figure of 20 to 30. (*Creation*, 12-07—2-08)

In some states it is unlawful for first cousins to marry. A few permit it. Legal considerations aside, it is not wise to expose helpless children to such avoidable, ill-health risks.

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There has been significant favorable response to our editor's article entitled, "Uncertain Sounds" (Nov., p. 25). Paul handed me one lengthy response from a person who requested anonymity, suggesting that I give it appropriate recognition in this column.

The writer expresses serious concerns about trends in the church. He believes that ministers should courageously speak against such trends. He wonders if the erratic weather patterns of 2007 are God's method of wanting to get our attention. He suggests a careful reading of the prophet Amos.

This respondent is concerned that recreational athletics have lost out to inordinate energy and interest in competitive sports in some churches. I continue to wonder why our people should take such a serious interest

in national sports. Bodily exercise profits only a little, compared to godliness that is profitable both for the present and the eternal future. (1 Timothy 4:8) It is doubtful that avid watching or following of sports events can rightly be considered "bodily exercise." The outlandish salaries that some professional players get are reason enough for Christian stewards to be disinterested. The recent publicity implicating many major-league baseball players in the use of illegal, performance-enhancing drugs is another reminder of how unworthy such things are of our serious interest.

Let us rather be "zealous of good works" (Titus 2:14). There are many opportunities for Kingdom work, nearby and far away. When I shared the above lines with a trusted peer, he mentioned the annual volleyball tournament in Sarasota as pertinent to this discussion. The total cost of such an event has to be substantial. Questions: Does church participation Christianize a sports event? Is the tournament at Sarasota good stewardship? Considering the needs for personal workers in prison revivals at Atmore, would a volleyball game with inmates qualify better as sports for a good cause? —DLM



Let us not use thin thread
when mending our ways.

The First Reason or the Second Reason?

Edwin Eby, Greencastle, PA

A n already successful business owner in his mid-sixties informed his sales people one morning that he had just discovered a business principle that would have been the catalyst of greater financial returns had he discovered it earlier in life. He explained that customers declining a purchase and asked why, seldom give the true reason first. "Maybe the second or third reason if prompted," he said, "but seldom the real reason."

Thus he informed his sales people, the next question after a customer's given reason for not making a purchase, should always be to politely ask something like, "And if that reason could be taken away, what other reason could keep you from the purchase?" That, he alleged, will be the "real" reason the customer is not making the purchase (or at least closer to the real reason than the first reason). "Sometimes," he informed them, "you might even take away the second reason to discover the 'real' reason. Folks seldom give the 'real' reason first. That is the way people are." He continued, "At least, if you know the real reason as a salesperson you have options to decide how best yet to make the sale. Please don't let them go out my door without at least knowing the 'real' reason we lost the sale."

We soon discovered the man was right. What the sales manager had really discovered was the nature of sin in man. He had discovered a business principle that works based upon the sin nature of mankind. Man is not always completely honest with himself, let alone with others. A long list of human motivation could be in focus. Perhaps it is shame, bashfulness, image, personal agenda, hiding of financial position, protection of family, or even as simple as the customer just wanting a cost estimate. Yet, the truth remains, seldom do folks give the real reason first.

Unregenerate man will make this business principle hold true but the transformed-in-Christ man will blow this financial marketing tool to the wind—not only in business, but in every aspect of life and conduct.

Paul gave a simple, holy answer to the common sin nature in man, "*But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:*" (Eph. 4:16). God wrote through the prophet, Zechariah (8:16), "*These are the things that ye shall do; Speak ye every man the truth to his neighbor; execute the judgment of truth and peace in your gates.*"

"But ye have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God

deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commanding ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God" (2 Cor. 4:2).

Yet at times even Christian pastors, teachers, bishops, teachers and/or brethren of every rank fall prey to this same "first reason" error, yet seem to do so without compunction of conscience. It appears at times to even "be the best for the occasion." A religious first reason seems at times to be the best means to a good, kind, and appropriate end. Sometimes it is given as the right way, when it is false.

Every transformed man or woman's first desire should always be to speak the truth in love. Not in anger, not in contempt, not for selfish advantage, not for the listener's advantage, not for

any reason!

Anything selfish usually wounds, creates suspicion, crucifies relationships, falsifies intent, leaves wrong impressions, assumptions, or conjectures that displease God. Perhaps it brings business "success." It is without doubt true of unregenerate men. But God forbid that it be true of his people.

God is true. God is love. "*By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another*" (John 13:35). Without exception, truth spoken in true, fervent love, void of ulterior motive **or** action, is God's way. It always brings the best from the occasion whether obvious or not. Let us state the real reason first—in love.

[From *The Pilgrim Witness*, August, 2007. Used by permission.]



ANNOUNCEMENT

The Annual Beachy Amish Ministers' meetings will be held March 25-27, 2008, D.V., in the Arthur, Illinois community. **Note that this is one week earlier than usual.**

Committee chairmen and organizations who plan to make a presentation during the business sessions, please e-mail Bro. Howard Kuhns at joyfulsing@juno.com to reserve a slot on the schedule. Please give an approximate length of time needed for your presentation.

Paul A. Miller, Trail, OH

MINISTERS' MEETING MESSAGES

This is a condensation of a message given at the annual ministers' meetings, April 3-5, 2007, at Yoder Mennonite Church, in rural Hutchinson, KS. The set of eight tapes or CD's with 10 messages (plus three sermon responses and a men's and women's session on tape) is available from SON Recordings, 10100 Piper Lane, Bristow, VA, 20136, for \$45, postpaid.

9. The Christian's Relationship to Civil Government

—Marvin Yoder, Roodhouse, IL

We have been enjoying your hospitality in this meeting. Hospitality is certainly a Christian virtue. When Jesus and his disciples traveled through Samaria and were denied hospitality, James and John suggested calling down fire from heaven. Jesus seems to have been disappointed by their attitude, and rebuked them with, “Ye know not what spirit ye are of, for the son of man is not come to destroy men’s lives but to save them” (Luke 9:55,56). May the Lord help us see our attitudes.

As we relate to civil government and the responsibilities we have toward them, the Christian virtues we are called to are just as necessary there as in any other relationship.

Any response that we make and any approach that we take need to be consistent with the New Testament.

In any authority relationship and question, we must consider two different levels: The foundational, doctrinal aspects as well as the application, our heart response. Are we really humble, obedient, and willing to sacrifice for the truth of God’s Word? I trust that we are.

In Romans 13:1-5, we have a basic passage dealing with this topic. God has given civil authorities their authority. We should regard that as God’s authority. We understand, of course, that applies as long as it’s not in conflict with the commandments of God. We are to be subject not only for wrath but also for conscience’ sake. Let us take the situation of observing the posted speed limits. If we drive according to what we think we can get away with, are we really being conscientious? When I see a person who is conscientious about such things, I take him to be a person who is serious about his relationship with God. Even if there is little enforcement or threat of penalty, the laws are clear.

Let us remember that Paul was inspired by the Holy Spirit to write this passage. He didn’t live in the

United States of America. He did not live in a country where he was guaranteed freedom of religion and speech. He often suffered much under civil authorities. After this letter to the Romans was written he suffered much more. He did not live under a benevolent government, and yet he said their power is of God.

In our Confession of Faith (Dortrecht, 1632), we note reverence and respect. The Anabaptist writers who wrote those 18 Articles of Faith were just coming out of severe persecution. I think martyrdoms were no longer occurring, yet there was persecution. They too wrote that the government has power from God and must be respected. We face these issues in real life, not necessarily with conflict every day, but cultivating scriptural relationships all the time.

In Matthew 22:21, we have a well-known account. In this incident, Jesus set things in order and gave balance to how these obligations should be regarded. If we find it hard to submit, we do well to consider Jesus' teaching here. In verse 16, the Pharisees tried flattery to open the conversation and asked Him if it was lawful to give tribute to Caesar or not. Likely it was then as it is now, people did not really enjoy paying taxes. They hoped to get Him with this trap. If He said they should pay their taxes, He would be

in trouble with the people and that might take Him off their hands. If He said it's alright not to pay taxes, they could report Him and He would be in big trouble with the Roman government. They didn't mind that prospect, either. But Jesus perceived their wickedness and asked, "Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites? Shew me the tribute money." When He saw it, He asked, "Whose is this image and superscription?" They acknowledged that it was Caesar's image. Then He answered their question, "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's." So much for their clever trap!

About 100 years ago, in 1908, several families moved from Somerset County, Pennsylvania, to the Norfolk/Kempsville area (now known as Virginia Beach) of Virginia. My grandparents and Noah Yoder were among those who moved there. The first years were not very prosperous, and they looked for extra work opportunities. They made a deal with the county to grade the roads, using a traction steamer that pulled a grader. Three men were needed to operate it: one man to drive the steamer, one man to operate the grader and one to be fireman. One day they were grading the roads and came by the county judge's home.

He came out and asked them to grade his lane on county time. Noah spoke for the group and said, “No, that’s not honest; we’re on county time, but we’ll come back and do it on our time, later.” The judge didn’t want that, so they went on.

Not long after that, Noah got a summons to serve on a jury. So he went down to the court house and asked to be excused. The same judge heard his plea. He refused to excuse Noah. He said he requires him to serve. Noah politely said that he cannot. So the judge gave him a written jail sentence of five days, which Noah was to start on a certain date in the future. Noah took it home and on the appointed day he took it down to the Kempsville jailer and presented himself. The jailer said, “My jail is not good enough for a man like you. I won’t accept you.”

Noah said, “I have this sentence, and I want to serve it.”

“No,” he countered, “You just take that home and forget about it.”

Noah was not to be put off, so the Kempsville jailer told him to go to the city of Norfolk “and if they take you, OK, but you’re not coming into my jail.” Whether the Kempsville jailer knew Noah personally or not, I’m not sure, but Noah was highly respected in Kempsville. So he went to the Norfolk prison and served

his sentence, where he made friends with some of the inmates who visited him after they were released. One of these inmates later said that Noah’s testimony in the prison marked a turning point in his life.

Several things stand out about Noah in this incident:

- His simple, quiet commitment to honesty.

- His stand on what was scripturally required of him (not to serve on a jury).

- His acceptance of the sentence without bitterness.

- His commitment to respecting civil government and doing what the law required.

In John 18:33-37, we have clear basis for our relationship with the civil government. This shows the two very different kingdoms. We are to be subject to each of them, with our highest loyalty reserved for God’s Kingdom. Peter would have fought to the death to defend Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, but when Jesus took his sword away, he was disarmed and demoralized. Jesus told Pilate, “Yes, I am a King, but not of this world. I don’t depend on the weapons of carnal warfare to protect my Kingdom.”

A kingdom has at least four different features: a king, subjects, territory and laws. In the Kingdom of God,

our King is Jesus, the subjects are those who submit themselves to Him (who are born again Christians), the territory is the world (every nation, tribe and race), and the laws are found in the Bible (New Testament). What other kingdom changes men's lives like this and endures for thousands of years on into eternity?

In Daniel 2:44, there's a verse that can be applied here. King Nebuchadnezzar saw a vision which God revealed to Daniel. In the vision was an image with a head of gold and increasingly less durable minerals down the image's form to the feet. Daniel explained how this represents the earthly kingdoms to come. He told him how a stone hewn out of the mountain would strike this statue and destroy it. Then the stone would grow until it filled the earth.

In earthly kingdoms, we generally find the emphasis on "my rights." In the kingdom of God, we count it a privilege to serve men as we submit to God. There is something in us that wants to say, "The civil government doesn't have the right to tell me what to do." But it does, as long as it doesn't violate the Scriptures.

Jesus in his wisdom refused to become entangled with earthly power. After He fed 5,000 men (plus women and children), they wanted to place a crown on his head and

make Him their king. He refused. Someone asked Him to arbitrate the inheritance with his brother, but Jesus declined. Slavery was prevalent during the time of Jesus and the Apostles. I find no record that Jesus or the Apostles spoke directly against it. They gave much direction on how to respond to it, both to masters and slaves. **Jesus did not come for social reform. He came to call men to salvation.**

God has made us. We are not an accident of evolution. Why do people want to believe in evolution? I believe it is simply because they do not want to be accountable to God. Let us be content in the fact that we twice belong to God. God has made us, and if we're Christians, Jesus has redeemed us.

In a raging, life-threatening storm on the Mediterranean Sea, Paul gave this testimony, "For there stood by me this night the angel of God, **whose I am and whom I serve...**" (Acts 27:23). In the midst of great adversity, Paul had complete confidence in Whose he was and Whom he served.

God is a possessive God. In Isaiah 43:1-4, we find much encouragement: we belong to God and He is with us. It is tempting for a natural-minded person to think that good people must get involved so that society can

be made better. We are God's, subjects of that heavenly kingdom. Our first activity, our primary allegiance, our clearest focus must be on the heavenly kingdom, even though we are subject to earthly powers, if we can do so without compromise. One writer made the observation that the church that involves itself with politics becomes "a confusing hybrid" that loses its power and focus.

We moved into the community at Roodhouse about 12 years ago. We have found a great welcome in the larger community. Some time ago we had a wedding which some local, non-members attended. One lady was really impressed. She said, "We need more people like you. We need you to get involved in county government. You should pursue higher education and become lawyers and doctors so you can change things here." We tried to say that we would lose what we now have if we did that. Lot and Abraham illustrate this principle. Lot became a man of worldly influence and lost his family. Old-fashioned, Uncle Abraham chose to make a living in the rugged hills, where he built altars to God, and taught his family the worship of God. When we adopt the ways of the world, we lose our power.

Once in my youth, we did some

"driving" for deer. In those days, one deer was the limit. What are you to do when you have your deer and others in the hunting party want you to help them get theirs? I faced pressure to commit myself to shooting another one and then have someone else put his tag on it, if that opportunity came to me. The fever was running high and I found it hard to resist the pressure. Then I looked at an older brother and asked him, "What would you do?"

He said, "I would not, for conscience' sake." That gave me just what I needed, to do what I really felt I should do. The rest of the day brought joy to me.

A scornful or superior attitude does not adorn Bible doctrine. I grew up hearing that milk inspectors were probably not very smart. One might also mention electrical inspectors, building inspectors, or others. We might think, *We could surely do better than that.* Does that adorn Christian doctrine? Or if a trooper stops us, are we quick to say he's unreasonable? I have challenged some of our brethren at home that if they get stopped (and they shouldn't get stopped, but if they do), they should thank that trooper.

Sometimes I wonder what the future holds. We are not in compliance with state requirements for teachers. But with the dangers of secular education,

we have good reason not to comply. Exception has been granted to us.

Discrimination against alternative lifestyles is becoming a question that we will likely some day be challenged for in the stand we take. Child training is another area. In Canada, that is already the case, to some extent. I believe that if we conscientiously obey as long as it does not conflict with our higher loyalties, it will stand us in better stead, when we can no longer do so. Then I think we are well advised to say, "This is what the Bible says," rather than, "This is what I think." I would not be surprised that those who come after us may be tested and penalized in some of these things.

We want to be clear in where we stand. We want to be humble. We want to have a free conscience in where we stand. Colossians 3:15 says, "Let the peace of God rule in your hearts...and be ye thankful." The peace of God is a state of being, but it is also a motivating force. If we have the peace of God in our hearts, it will help us face whatever comes. I don't believe that we really need to fear these things. Should we be concerned? Yes! Fearful? No! Respectful and courteous? Yes! **Let's just remember the two-kingdoms!**

Let's be clear in the differences

between a non-resistant person and a pacifist. A pacifist says, "I don't believe in war; I don't believe the government should go to war; I'm going to petition the government and get people stirred up; I'm going to help organize a peace march to get them to do as they ought to do." We have a higher calling than that. It is important that our young brethren also understand this. Sometimes we have not been as clear on this teaching as we should have been.

We [conservative Anabaptists] are not used to being reproached for Christ. We enjoy being respected and honored and I fear that we have become too fond of it. Some time we or our children may experience something quite different. Things that cost us only a little do not mean as much to us as those that cost much. The forgiveness of the parents at Nickel Mines cost them terribly much. Their testimony has had great impact. There are few testimonies more powerful than a loving, non-resistant spirit.

William McGrath said: **We must hold fast to non-conformity, lest we lose our non-resistance.** True non-resistance and the way of the Kingdom of God are best taught from the heart of a true shepherd. Let us build conviction before a crisis comes.



Nothing chills a friendship like a cold shoulder.

Our Conscience

Violet Yoder, Danville, AL

Our conscience is a tender part
God has given to us all.
When we hear the gentle stirring,
We must answer to the call.

We know it's Jesus calling,
Though some ignore the voice,
Not yet ready to surrender
And make Jesus Christ their choice.

But for those who are born again,
Greatest care must be given,
Daily taking inventory...
Have our sins all been forgiven?

It's not safe to only measure
By what one's conscience says,
Because there is a danger
To succumb to carnal ways.

Then soon we won't think again
That what we do may not be right.
We get so used to it now
It looks okay in our own sight.

So you see the great importance
To always look into God's Word,
And then to measure by what is there
Then the right voice will be heard. ☀

In 2007, Christian Aid Ministries sent Lyndon Overholt (SC) and Darrell Yoder (VA, presently serving in Pakistan) on an investigative mission to northern Iraq to see what the spiritual and humanitarian needs are among the Kurds. Many of these are “Internally Displaced Peoples” who suffered much during Saddam Hussein’s reign.

Lyndon and Darrell visited communities and were able to pass out Christian literature, even in schools. They found the people warm and friendly, but with deep spiritual needs, even among those who profess Christianity. Let us join in prayer for openness to the Gospel in this nation which is in the spotlight of the world. Let us pray for a biblical, Anabaptist church to be planted in Iraq.

“Twenty years of war, diplomatic isolation and economic disasters have brought both a lowering of prejudices against the Gospel among Muslims and an openness to witnessing and to reading the Scriptures” (Operation World). The following article is abridged from a report presented at the CAM Open House, November, 2007.

—FS

PEACE FOR IRAQ?

—Darrell Yoder

Ancient history

Iraq, as it is called today, played significantly in the history of the

Bible. Iraq, in ancient times, included at least parts of Mesopotamia, Assyria, and Babylon. One evening, Lyndon Overholt and I joined a few people to visit a neighboring village. I learned that some elders know a lot of ancient history. It is thought that the Garden of Eden may have been near the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers. The elders knew about the Tower of Babel and about where it was located. As for Nimrod, the mighty hunter before the Lord, oh yes, they knew about him. Ur of the Chaldees, the original home of Abraham, was the capital of the ancient Sumerian kingdom in Mesopotamia. The ruins of Ur are still in Iraq near the Euphrates River. Daniel was taken from Judah to Babylon as a POW (prisoner of war). Iraqis say Daniel was buried in the modern-day Iraqi city of Kirkuk. Ancient Nineveh, where Jonah preached, is near and part of the present-day Iraqi city of Mosul. The prophet Nahum’s crumbling tomb-house is in Alqush. Other colorful characters, like Sennacherib and Nebuchadnezzar reigned in ancient Iraq.

Christian History

Iraqis tend to process their history with far-reaching memories. One young Iraqi friend said, “A few hundred years is like a couple of days.” They know their history quite

well. This influences the people today in the form of ethnic, tribal, familial, and religious rivalries. There are approximately 30 evangelical and Protestant churches in Iraq, besides house churches. A small group also holds to the teachings of John the Baptist. It is thought the Apostle Thomas brought Christianity to Iraq on his way to India.

Saddam's ruthlessness in the north

In recent times, Saddam Hussein sought to squelch the Kurdish resistance movement in northern Iraq. He instituted a plan of ruthlessness in that part of the country in which he razed about 4,500 Assyrian, Kurdish, and Armenian villages, without regard for religion—Muslim or Christian. His plan was to disrupt these ethnicities by relocating these villages to what were called “Obligatory Collective Villages” and moving in Arabs from the south. Many difficulties face those who have been displaced from their ancestral villages. One man said how sometimes Christians in Baghdad are presented with these options: leave or convert and join the Jihadis. Refusal to comply may mean death.

In the religious arena

With freedom from Saddam, many northern Kurdish people are proud of their religious diversity, which includes Muslims, Yezidis, and Christians. Many Kurdish Muslims

tend to be half-hearted about Islam. In fact, someone said that some of the Kurdish youth (from the north) hate Islam, because of the persecution from Saddam’s regime in which religion was forced on them by Arabs. This situation creates a real door of opportunity to spread the Gospel through literature and witness. The believers who speak Kurdish languages need Christian materials for spiritual growth and development. One of the pastors expressed a desire for someone to come and give Bible teaching. While the conditions in the south are quite different, the situation in the north is presently such that it seems favorable to starting a church. In fact, the government may even provide free land for a building site.

Summarizing the situation in Iraq

Many aid organizations consider it too dangerous to work in Iraq and have ceased their operations, particularly in the south. Even among the Kurdish people in the north there are only a few organizations functioning. Many Iraqis are depressed about their future, especially for their children. They say there is no future in Iraq. Is there hope? Iraqis are not so sure. But this is sure: hope does not flourish in fear, but in love. And peace will never be shot from a gun barrel. In the battle for Iraq, please pray for these people. Iraqis need a shepherd—the Good Shepherd!



Cherish the Moment

Mary June Glick

As we grow older we are more aware of the fact that life is short. We pass through this life only once. Even if we would desire to redo or relive the past it is impossible. The past is gone forever, never to be replayed. My encouragement to those younger than myself--and especially to mothers--is to "cherish the moment."

We recently moved to South Carolina and live next door to our son and their family of five girls. As I observe their family interact together, it brings back many memories of the days when our own children were small. We have many happy memories and I treasure them but if I could change anything, it would be to enjoy each moment more and try not to be so busy and frustrated with the daily demands of life.

Cherish each moment—

1. The soft cuddly warmth of the small life wrapped securely in your arms in the middle of the night. Take that moment to thank God for the privilege of motherhood.

2. The endless questions of the three-year-old as she wants to help knead the bread, bake cookies and wash dishes, remembering as you take the time to let her help you now, you are teaching her to help you in the future.

3. The excited chatter of happy voices begging you to come outside to see the

bird's nest, the new baby kitties or just to peek out the window and watch the busy birds at the feeder.

4. The quiet moment of peeking in at the children fast asleep in their beds and breathing a prayer for their future.

5. The daily work of preparing food for a healthy, growing family, remembering that some day they will be grown and you will wish you could fill the cookie jar again for hungry children.

6. The happy evenings on the living room floor or around the kitchen table playing games and drinking hot chocolate—special memory-making experiences.

The moments I mentioned refer especially to young families, but it is important for each of us to "cherish the moment" even if we are not busy, young mothers. We can enjoy life in the very place, position, and season of life we are in right now.

Some of the moments I treasure are:

1. Watching the birds at the feeder.
2. A quiet evening at home with my husband and a good book to read.

3. The happy voices of grandchildren.

4. Spending time with a friend.

5. The privilege to just relax and know it's okay.

May we learn to "cherish each moment" that God gives to us. 

Her Prayer

Anita Yoder, Ligonier, IN

Christians are persecuted in many countries of the world. Some countries say they have freedom of religion, but when Christians speak for God, they are persecuted by different groups and nothing is done to stop them. Some countries are closed to the Gospel.

A little, eight-year-old girl misses her daddy. He is not at home anymore. He is a prisoner and has a four-year sentence. Her name means "faith," so to protect her identity, we will call her Faith.

Faith tries to be cheerful about their situation and tries to comfort her mother. They are still faithful in attending church and encouraging other believers, but Faith is still lonely. They especially find encouragement when they know that Christians in other countries are praying for them.

"I like to sit in Daddy's car, because then I feel closer to him and I talk to God better about him," says Faith. "I feel closer to him in the car because I can still smell a hint of his perfume. I pray that my dad will come back soon. I pray that one day I will hear his voice again. I know that God can

make miracles; maybe some people have found God through all this already. I pray for them."

Her father's Bible has been taken away and so he needs to recall Scripture from memory. He still witnesses for Christ when he has opportunity. He does not pray to be released early, just for grace to be faithful and worthy of Christ's love.

How can we help? We can help Christians in distress by praying for them and their families. God knows their names and situations. We can take a country a day and pray for the Christians in these specific locations. If we all did this, how powerful would be the network of our prayers!

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Dear Readers,

My name is Dorcas Anna Miller. My birthdate is November 23, 1996. My parents are Richard and Mary Miller. I have four sisters and two brothers.

My hobbies are reading, swimming, baking, scrap booking, and camping. I would like a twin or penpal of any age.

A friend,

Dorcas Miller

6176 McLain Road

Oriskany Falls, NY 13425



Dear Youth,

Are you experiencing difficulties in any of your relationships? If you are, it should not come as a surprise. Even Jesus experienced difficulties in relating to people. The question for us is, "When I experience difficulties in relating to people, do I allow God to redeem these situations by

This Month's QUESTION

What are some basic Bible principles that can help us in our daily relationships with family members and fellow employees?

response from our readers ...

Proverbs 18:24 says, "A man that hath friends must shew himself friendly." I believe that this applies to all our relationships. If we want to have a good relationship with others, we must look at ourselves first and be someone who is willing to be a friend. We must also be humble enough to allow God to speak to us through our friends, family, and fellow employees. I think these are some of the keys to successful relationships.

A reader from Virginia

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The first basic Bible principle that comes to my mind is the second commandment: ..."thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" (Matthew

conforming me into His image?"

Our tendency in difficult relationships is to retreat and distance ourselves from those with whom we disagree. When we distance ourselves from people, our hearts shrink in size and God becomes more distant. This month's responders share some helpful insights for our daily tests. —EE

22:39). Usually we love ourselves pretty much. Our human nature tends to be self-centered and selfish. If we would really start loving the people around us more, and think less of ourselves, our homes would be happier, and our work environment would be a better place. Recently I came across this quote by G. K. Chesterton, "The Bible tells us to love our neighbors, and also to love our enemies; probably because they are generally the same people." Sometimes the people that we rub shoulders with on a daily basis can be hard to get along with. There is a joy that comes from loving other people when you know you couldn't do it on your own.

LaDonna Stoltzfus, Aroda, VA

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10 Commandments in Relating to Family Members (or fellow employees)

1. Thou shalt have no better friends than thine own family members with whom you rub shoulders every day. Prov. 17:17, “A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.” Our families are the ones who hurt most with us when we suffer--whether physically or spiritually. Are we there for them when they face trials?

2. Thou shalt love thy brother more than thine own self. 1 Cor. 13, “Charity...seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked,” Love will cause us to give up our own ideas and “...in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves” (Phil. 2:3b).

3. Thou shalt not speak unkindly to thy brother. Prov. 15:1, “A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger.” It takes two to argue; make sure you aren’t one of them.

4. Remember to daily show your love and appreciation by your words *and* actions. Share in the daily workload cheerfully and be willing to do more than your share. Rom. 12:1, “I beseech you therefore, brethren,...that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice... which is your reasonable service.”

5. “Honor thy father and mother.” Jesus, when sought by his parents in the temple, asked them, “Wist ye not that I must be about my Father’s business?” Nevertheless, He went with them and

was subject unto them. Do we willingly submit to our parents’ counsel?

6. Thou shalt not kill the dreams and ambitions of thy younger siblings. Mark 9:42, “And whosoever shall offend one of these little ones that believe in me, it were better for him that...he were cast into the sea.”

7. Thou shalt not commit adultery with thy friend’s family. Accept the family God has placed you in and stop wishing things were different. Rom. 9:20, “Who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to Him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?”

8. Thou shalt not steal thy parents’ money, nor use it unwisely. Don’t rob them of sleep by coming home later than the time they set. Prov. 28:24, “Whoso robbeth his father or mother, and saith it is no transgression, the same is the companion of a destroyer.”

9. Thou shalt not falsely accuse thy brother. Don’t be like David’s big brother, Eliab, when Jesse sent David to check on his brothers. 1 Sam. 17:28, 29, “...Eliab’s anger was kindled against David, and he said, Why camest thou down hither? And with whom hast thou left those few sheep in the wilderness? I know thy pride and the naughtiness of thine heart; for thou art come down that thou mightest see the battle. And David said, What have I now done? Is there not a cause?”

10. Thou shalt not covet thy brother’s abilities and talents, but accept the way

God made you and seek to use your talents for His glory.

Joanne Stoltzfus, Woodstown, NJ

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A biblical principle that is easily applied to daily life is the Golden Rule. The Golden Rule says, Treat others as you would be treated. One particular way we can easily hurt others is by using indirect communication. It's quite easy to say in a public situation, "When did we switch to sweeping the floor once a month?" but it is far more beneficial to all involved when we talk only to the person involved, "_____, I think the floor looks dirty. Is there any chance you'd have time to sweep it?" We need to be careful that our speech lends to easy and friendly relationships with our co-workers and family.

Virgil Nisly, Oswego, KS

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Jesus is the greatest example we have to follow. He says we must love others just like we love ourselves. Putting others first can go a long way in building a relationship. Treating others like we would like to be treated

is another principle that works very well. Above all, ask God for wisdom and direction in all you do.

Ethan Zook, Abbeville, SC

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When I think of relating to my family and others around me in my daily life, the word submission comes to mind. Submission touches many areas of our work and is very vital in building good relationships with those in authority over us. What is submission? When we submit we allow ourselves to be put under the will of those in authority over us. Philippians 2:5-8 brings out how Jesus was the perfect example of submission, being willing to humble Himself and submit to the Father's plan even though it wasn't what His flesh wanted to do. Do I consider the needs and desires of those around me or does self have priority in my life? As we live a life of humility and true submission with God's help, our relationships with those around us will be deeper and we will be able to enjoy our work and responsibilities.

Marnita Stoltzfus, Cayo District, Belize

Next Month's QUESTION

What have you received from your Christian heritage that you would like to pass on to the generation after you?

Please answer by Feb. 15.



THOUGHT GEMS

Pedestrians and riders are safest when drivers
add horse sense to horsepower.



A pessimist soaks up sunshine and sends out gloom.



We can't all be efficiency experts; some must work.



One had better put his finger on a problem before
sticking his nose in it.



Profanity is the effort of a weak mind trying to
express itself forcefully.



A religion that costs nothing and suffers
nothing is worth nothing.

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