



calvary messenger

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

Galatians 6:14

MARCH 2008

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

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 be 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.) \$7.50, 3 years (U.S.) \$21.00. 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.

Joseph

Rachel Wagler, Greensburg, KY

Joseph was a favorite
Of Jacob, his aged father.
But Joseph, to his brothers,
Was—oh, such a bother.

One night, Joseph dreamed a dream
Of himself and all his brothers.
He dreamed that his sheaf arose
As it stood among the others.

Joseph dreamed another dream
Made his brothers hate him so.
The sun, moon and eleven stars
To him they bowed so low.

His brothers didn't realize
His dreams would all come true.
They also didn't realize
What all that they would do.

The brothers sold poor Joseph
To some people on the go.
They took him down to Egypt,
Where he didn't know a soul.

But Joseph—he was faithful
In all that he went through.
Let's have the faith of Joseph,
And be always kind and true.



Treasures Old and New

Jesus said, “Therefore every scribe instructed concerning the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out of his treasure things **new** and **old**” (Matthew 13:52 NKJV, boldface added). We seem to get easily enthused about something new, but it’s harder to keep alive our commitment to essential, long-standing values, especially after they are quite familiar and no longer new.

It is also easier to critically evaluate the old than the new because we’ve had more time to observe it. The words we choose tell on us. Such words as “tired,” “entrenched,” and “sterile” (in describing the old) have a much less healthy ring to them than do words like “creative,” “novel,” or “fresh” which seem typically to get chosen when describing something new.

Rather than always making it a choice (of “either/or”) between old or new, we do better to combine them (that’s “both/and”). To ensure a healthy future for us and our children, we must make peace with the familiar and seek to enrich it. The end product will not be a duplicate of the old, but in those cases where the new carries no qualities of the original, it

is predictably inferior to the old.

The book, *Good to Great*, encourages leaders to “preserve the core and stimulate change.” What a succinct way to express this noble ideal!

We might state our mission as a denomination like this: “To receive the salvation of Jesus Christ and to live for the glory of God and the benefit of man.” This mission will keep us busy till the end of time and will potentially carry us to our neighbor and to the ends of the earth. This mission has come to us through the Protestant Reformation of the 16th century as it was redefined by early Anabaptists, many of whom gave their lives as martyrs. It is distinguished from other Christian mission statements by differences in understanding of citizenship issues, by replacing loyalty to the conventions of unregenerate society with loyalty to the brotherhood (the body of Christ) and by our earnest desire to rediscover apostolic faith and fervor, even though we often fall short. Thus we would “preserve the core and stimulate change.”

Let us consider these questions essential to positive change:

Why do I consider a given change?

Does it line up with Scripture?

Will it draw me closer to God?

How might it affect future generations?

No news ever exceeded the old, old story: the good news of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Another example of good news is that of God extending to us His mercies each morning and that list goes on and on. Even though the story of Jesus is quite familiar, it bears repeating. We are to tell it and live it in both new and old ways. God instructed Israel with this: “Remember the days of old, Consider the years of many generations. Ask your father, and he will show you; Your elders, and they will tell you:” (Deuteronomy 32:7 NKJV). But He also encourages his people, “Oh, sing to the Lord a new song!” (Psalm 96:1).

Wonderful blessings from God abound: His tender mercies, His lovingkindness, the works of His hands, His throne, His judgments, and His

wonders. (Psalms 25:6; 77:11; 93:2; 119:52; 143:5). God sent these blessings in ancient times. They stand and continue to this day.

God also promised new manifestations of His work: “Behold, I will do a new thing, Now it shall spring forth; Shall you not know it? I will even make a road in the wilderness and rivers in the desert” (Isaiah 43:19).

God gives many blessings—old and new. Let us seek to use both old and new—without negative or extreme reaction—as we evaluate issues before us. What we accept for ourselves and what we commend to those who follow us will probably not be all old or all new.

Whatever we do, let us humbly “follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord” (Hebrews 12:14).

[*A number of these thoughts are borrowed and adapted from David Brickner in *Jews for Jesus*, January, 2008.]

—PLM 

reader response

Re: The New Conservatives (Dec., 2007) and Reader Response (Feb., 2008)

I want to take a moment and express my appreciation for the article, “The New Conservative,” Dec. 2007. It was a thoughtful and insightful

article. I appreciate that Bro. Melvin Lehman recognized the genuine desire of many young people (who are often written off as liberal and self-centered) to follow the Lord Jesus in a personal and meaningful way. The article was a blessing to me. In many

ways, I identify with the ideals of the “New Conservative.”

I did not appreciate the response printed in the February issue. I think the reader missed the point of Bro. Melvin’s article. He seemed to take offense at the idea that conviction is a personal matter. He misunderstood the meaning of the term “counter-cultural” as Bro Melvin used it. Last, and most importantly, he rejected the sincerity of those young (and sometimes not so young) brethren who were the subject of the article. May God bless Bro. Melvin for his courage in taking the stand that he

has. I wish this reader could have been less reactive and more discerning in his response.

Thank you for hearing me out!

—*Samson Eicher, Butler, IN*

• • • • •

I received the CM today and found it unusually encouraging. It was encouraging to me, first of all, that someone would point out the dangers of The New Conservative and then doubly encouraging with the fact that you printed it. Thank you and God bless you!

Maranatha!

—*Leroy E. Lapp, New Holland, PA*



the bottom line

The Tension of Faith vs. Obedience— *Part two of two*

Aaron Lapp, Kinzers, PA

In Part One of this two-part series, we have seen how obedience and faith in the Scriptures run on parallel tracks. The proposition here is that obedience ranks higher than faith. To equalize the two more appropriately, faith shall not be lowered or, in any way, discounted. The burden is that obedience is too often lightly regarded, and in some cases, despised.

God’s commandments enjoin faith to our experience. But modern-day faith tries to reduce obedience to God’s specifics as something optional or that it may even be entirely removed from His precepts without consequence.

God’s commands seem too problematic for modern Christianity. Those who believe this philosophy interpret the requirement of obedi-

ence to be to instill fear, which offsets God's love. Faith alone is believed to draw out the best response in people, sending them on their happy way to heaven, believing solely in the love of God. The call for obedience, even toward God, is seen as too restrictive for modern Christians, and even more so for post-modern Christians.

Let us consider the following definitions:

Modern Christians: those who insist that faith alone is sufficient as a valid response to God. This somehow is supposed to cover one's responsibility to God's commandments, some of which are perceived to be out of date, unworkable, or too intrusive to modern conventions. Surely God understands that, they say.

Post-Modern Christians: those who circumvent even the basic matters of faith to salvation. They assume all people are the children of God since everyone was created by God. Surely God would not cast His own creatures into hell. Hell, they say, is contrived to instill fear in people as a means to keep them subservient. They call that fear a human way of attempting to control those who choose to differ by deviant and disobedient lifestyles. The same applies to judgment and the wrath of God, since He is only a beneficent and

loving God, if He exists at all. Their reasoning goes like this:

Since there is no eternal hell, there is no need to choose.

Since choice is not needed, God's wrath is not actual.

Since God's wrath is not actual, judgment is not real.

Since God's judgment is not real, His love is all that remains.

Since God's love remains, what necessity could there be of wrath or judgment?

Since there is no need for love, there is no need for God!

It is difficult to overstate the importance of vigorously reclaiming the clarity of obedience as a primary response to God.

Calling faith the primary and single response to the Gospel has abused the call to righteousness and holiness of life. Making the Gospel of Christ a matter of faith versus obedience has given the faulty justification to be disobedient to a number of explicit commands. Disobedience has become widespread in the modern church as men praise God for their liberty!

When and where Jesus' words are circumvented for their inconvenience, it is but one-half step to bypass, yea, even with celebration, additional specifics in the Epistles.

The dynamic for faithful obedience to God's Word calls for a literal

approach to the Bible. It must be approached as one unit of revelation from God with one system of interpretation. A tiered interpretation (some portions interpreted figuratively and some literally) can give way to piecemeal changes in application from one generation to the next. Actually, this very thing is happening before our eyes.

A non-literal interpretation of any part opens a hole in the dam, makes a crack in the door; which paves the way to humanly interject one's preferred application, randomly as wishes require. Our interpretation of the Scriptures is or could become the most crucial issue to face the conservative Anabaptist churches of today.

The Bible does not give just cause for obedience to be considered optional. The new covenant has removed obedience to the ceremonial law for righteousness and put in its place faith in the shed blood of Christ, in His sacrificial death, and in the mighty and glorious resurrection. And yet, the moral and ethical considerations for the people of faith make us duty-bound under God to obey the specifics of Christian living.

The faith awakening of 50 years ago in the Mennonite Church (and our own Beachy churches) was one

in which heartfelt obedience actually rose out of an earnest and newly-found dimension of faith. Faith at that juncture did not eclipse the emphasis on obedience that was common at that time. The place for faith was seen as a valid appropriation of grace. Salvation was not achieved by obedience alone, even though that sometimes marked their prior experience and emphasis.

Somewhere in these past 30 years, the cry has gone out among us equating any call for obedience as reverting to a "works religion." This is most unfortunate. Obedience to God's commands is in no way synonymous to a system of works for salvation. Much misunderstanding, even confusion and deception, has resulted in this matter among laymen and preachers alike.

A bone got stuck in the ecclesiastical throat. It has caused the church to choke when a biblical call for obedience alongside one's faith should have been clearly emphasized without side-stepping and apology.

If a literal obedience seems too narrow, let's look at its counterpart. The counterpart of obedience is disobedience.

Disobedience is condemned in Scripture. Disobedience is consistently portrayed as being wayward,

going astray, being lost, requiring repentance, and returning to God.

If obedience is not a necessary consideration for the modern Christian, what shall we make of Bible passages that censure disobedience?

If obedience is not necessary, as some say, will they also say disobedience has no consequences?

Let us hear the Word of the Lord.

“Unto you therefore which believe, he is precious: *but unto them which be disobedient*, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense, even to them which stumble at the word, being *disobedient...*” (1 Peter 2:7,8 emphasis added). “Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled...is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled. They profess they know God; but in works they deny him, *being abominable, and disobedient...*” (Titus 1:15,16 emphasis added).

The Sermon on the Mount includes these words of Jesus spoken with clarity: “Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and *doeth them*, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock...And everyone that heareth these sayings of mine and *doeth them not*, shall be likened to a foolish man,

which built his house upon the sand” (Matthew 7:24, 26 italics added).

The Lord Jesus foresaw the possibility that some people would hear His sayings but fail to do them. Jesus Himself has made a remarkable distinction between obedience to His commands and the self-righteous law-keeping insisted on by the Pharisees. It is a serious error for any teacher or preacher to teach that a literal obedience is equal to Pharisaical keeping of the law of Moses. These lines run in opposite directions.

Faith in Christ for salvation and for righteousness with God has far superseded the righteousness offered by the law. Obedience to God is never useless in communicating the Gospel. “Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the *children of disobedience*” (Ephesians 5:6 emphasis added).

Apostolic writings clarifying disobedience use such terms as: transgression (overstepping a prescribed line), refusing to hear, spurning belief, unwilling to be persuaded, unruly (without rule), disorderly, or departing from the living God. These terms readily provide evidence that such are outside of His acceptance, despite their claims of faith.

“Know ye not, that to whom ye

yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of *obedience unto righteousness*? But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have *obeyed from the heart* that form of doctrine which was delivered you” (Romans 6:16,17 emphasis added).

The Bottom Line: The identifying

marks of faith that is approved and acceptable to God issues are a ready and willing obedience and yieldedness. Discipleship is a matter of allegiance identifiable by how a life is lived. How a life is lived is recognized by measurable and verifiable obedience. This alone befits a faithful heart given to God in joyful abandon and total commitment.



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Correcting a Faulty View of Divine Providence

Merle Ruth, Annville, PA

It would be interesting to know how God views our attempts to “explain” the so-called tragedies of life.

How do we console the survivors when a mother falls asleep at the wheel and is killed as her car slams into a tree? What do we say when a much-needed father falls from a scaffold and is crippled for life? How can we comfort that young, recently married husband when an icy road claims the life of his bride?

In the wake of such sad happenings, those who stand by do have an obligation. We are to “weep with them that weep” (Romans 12:15). God comforts us so that “we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble” (2 Corinthians 1:4). And He surely wants us to do better than those who miserably sought to comfort Job. This article is a plea to weigh our words well lest we make God responsible for inflicting all such hard-to-bear pain.

With the best intentions, some people go so far as to say that with God there are really no accidents. Along with this mentality commonly goes the idea that everything that

happens, however tragic it may be, must be interpreted as the direct outworking of the will of God.

In their letters of condolence, well-meaning people may include poems such as the following:

“Things don’t just happen to those who love God,

They are planned by His own hand;

Then molded and shaped and timed by His clock,

Things don’t just happen—they’re planned.”

Another similar poem entitled, “It Didn’t Just Happen,” includes this verse:

“Things don’t just happen to the children of God,

The blueprint was made by His hand,

He designed all the details to conform to His Son,

So all things that happen are planned.”

With the best of intentions, thoughts such as these are shared for the purpose of helping those involved to reconcile their concept of God with the loss they have suffered. But does the sharing of such ideas actu-

ally accomplish that purpose? This writer fears it may do the opposite. It may create in the human mind a different kind of God from the one we really have, a hard-to-love kind of God, a planner of tragedies.

As already indicated, people who subscribe to this mistaken view of divine providence somehow feel that what we commonly call an accident is easier to bear if we view it as a divine appointment. Furthermore, they draw support for this idea from Hebrews 9, where death is said to be an appointed occurrence. Apparently, they then conclude that every person who dies is keeping a divinely-arranged appointment. But that is an overdrawn deduction. True, because of sin, “it is appointed unto man once to die” (Hebrews 9:27). However, I believe to infer from this that God also decrees the time and manner of every person’s death is reading into that passage more than it is meant to convey.

Another commonly misinterpreted passage is Job’s divinely-inspired observation with regard to the length of a man’s life span: “seeing his days are determined” (Job 14:5a). Does this mean, as some have concluded, that God predetermines the exact length of each life? More likely it simply means that God put an approximate

limit to the average length of a life span. This conclusion agrees with the psalmist’s observation: “The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labor and sorrow; for it is soon cut off and we fly away” (Psalm 90:10). At the most, a man can exceed by only a little the usual life span. There are ways, although none are acceptable, in which one can, by his own volition, shorten his life (Psalm 55:23), but there is no way in which one can lengthen his life indefinitely.

Among those who die young, accidents are frequently the cause. From the very beginning, God foreknew that accidents would be inevitable. Being our Creator, God foreknew that we would sometimes err in our judgment and commit fatal mistakes (Exodus 21:33). Being the originator of the law of centrifugal force, God foreknew that now and then a wood splitter’s ax head would fly off its handle and accidentally injure or kill the man’s coworker (Deuteronomy 19:5). Being the author of the law of gravity, God likewise foreknew that without some sort of protective barrier around their flat roofs, there would be many injuries among the Israelites. He therefore instructed that safety measures be taken to prevent

people from falling from those roofs (Deuteronomy 22:8). God's purpose was for the prevention of accidents because He would not suspend the law of gravity when someone fell. Neither would he prevent every occurrence of a fall (2 Samuel 4:4).

Although God can intervene to prevent an accident, many times He chooses not to intervene. In fact, such intervention may represent the exception rather than the rule. When a tornado roars through town, more often than not the houses of the righteous and the wicked alike are destroyed. This relentless impartiality of natural law appears to be in view at the end of the Sermon on the Mount. There Jesus paints a graphic picture of the storms of life beating upon both houses--the foolish man's house and the wise man's house. For reasons known best to God, He does not exempt His saints from the common woes of life.

In addition to foreknowing that there will be accidents, God has foreknowledge of every particular accident before it occurs. Does knowing that it will happen make it happen? God likewise foreknows how and when you will die. Does that foreknowledge determine how and when you will die? When that foreknown time arrives, does God

make you die? The parting wish of the patriarch Jacob was "Now let me die" (Genesis 46:30).

Is there then a difference between foreknowledge and foreordination?


Indeed there is—a vast difference. Is this not where the confusion lies? Some of our expressions betray the fact that we confuse foreknowledge with foreordination. God foreknows a great deal that He does not foreordain (plan). True, God has the prerogative and the ability to foreordain when He chooses to do so. For example, salvation was foreordained by God. According to God's purpose, Jesus died in a foreordained way and at a foreordained time. Repeatedly, Jesus spoke of His approaching hour. Unlike the death of Jesus, your death and mine will most likely come about by what we might call natural processes. Possibly death by accident could be included in that category since it is part of human experience.

In the opinion of this writer, the idea that God engineers every experience that comes into one's life, including the time and manner of his death, is without biblical support. Most likely it is one of our borrowings from either Calvinism or fatalism. John Calvin promoted the theory that every event in one's life was decreed by God. The com-

mon label for this is predestination. Supposedly, your life is programmed by God. Although we generally disassociate ourselves from Calvinism, it appears as though this idea now and then slips through the filter. It may also be that we have rather innocently allowed fatalism to color our philosophy of life. Fatalism is the philosophical counterpart of Calvin's predestination. The thoroughgoing fatalist takes in stride everything that happens on the basis that it was predetermined by fate and is therefore inevitable. Both Calvinism and fatalism fail the biblical test because they make human choice a matter of little or no significance. **If my whole life from start to finish is already programmed for me, why be concerned about right choices?** Why even be careful when driving on the highway? Furthermore, these systems of thought, (Calvinism in particular), make God directly responsible for all the "bad" things that happen even to

godly people.

In the wake of a tragic accident, the almost inevitable question is—why did God allow it? Although we might wish for more and better answers to that question, it is good to be relieved of the necessity of viewing God as having made it happen. And it is comforting to know that **God is great enough to use for our benefit every pain-inflicting experience that comes our way, even those which He Himself does not send.** Such experiences may actually give God the opportunity to do what He otherwise would not do in the lives of the sorrowing survivors. We have this blessed assurance: "All things work together for good to them that love God" (Romans 8:28). Having a promise like this eliminates the need for having all our questions answered.

[From *The Eastern Mennonite Testimony*, January, 2008. Used by permission.] 

If the Bible is wrong in telling us whence we came,
will it be right in telling us where we are going?

marriages

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

Coblentz-Miller

Bro. Phillip, son of Wallace and Ruth Ann Coblentz, Flemingsburg, KY, and Sis. Susanna, daughter of Levi and Sarah Mae Miller, Bloomfield, IN, at Faith Christian Church for Believers' Fellowship on Nov. 16, 2007, by Marvin Yoder.

Esh-Helmuth

Bro. Al, son of Dan and Caroline Esh, Flemingsburg, KY, and Sis. Susan, daughter of Ernest and Virginia Helmuth, Flemingsburg, KY, at Oak Grove Mennonite Church, Aroda, VA, on Jan. 19, 2008, by Tim Miller.

cradle roll

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

Anderson, Marvin and Carmalita (Chub), Cayo, Belize, second child and dau., Clarita Joy, Oct. 14, 2007.

Beiler, Marcus and Joanna (Kurtz), Christiana, PA, second child and son, Carson James, Jan. 19, 2008.

Bontrager, Nelson and Krista (Wray), Greentown, IN, fourth child and dau., Kiehana Laree, Dec. 6, 2007.

Jantzi-Wagler

Bro. Ryan, son of Kenneth and Bernita Jantzi, Wellesley, ON, and Sis. Lynette, daughter of Elroy and Diane Wagler, Newton, ON, at Cedar Grove A.M. Church for Fellowship Haven A.M. Church, on August 4, 2007, by Laverne Ropp.

Miller-Yoder

Bro. Ryan, son of Dennis and Verna Miller, Kalona, IA, and Sis. Charlene, daughter of Jonas and Linda Yoder, Leon, IA, at Trinity Christian Church for Salem Leon Mennonite Church, Nov. 3, 2007, by Monroe Gingerich.

Schlabach-Miller

Bro. Jordan, son of Jerry and MaryAnn Schlabach, Millersburg, OH, and Sis. Marcia, daughter of Moses and Erma Miller, Sugarcreek, OH, at Maranatha Church on Nov. 2, 2007, by Paul Leroy Miller.

Byers, Steven and Janelle (Glick), Sta-
nardsville, VA, second child and dau.,
Eden Dorothea, Jan. 10, 2008.

Detweiler, Lester and Lena (Detweiler),
Sullivan, IL, sixth child, fourth dau., Julie
Nicole, Nov. 13, 2007.

Graber, Kenneth and Geneva (Wagler),
Amboy, IN, first child and son, Benson
Drew, Dec. 18, 2007.

Gerber, Ralph and Bernice (Wagler),
Millbank, ON, sixth child, third dau.,
Lisa Renee, Nov. 14, 2007.

Gingerich, Kendall and Diane (Miller), Plain City, OH, second child and son, Kolton David, Dec. 15, 2007.

Helmuth, Ellis and Hannah (Yoder), Riverside, IA, third child, second son, Jefferson Clark, Oct. 30, 2007.

Herschberger, Alan and Julia (Beachy), Amboy, IN, first child and son, Kaden Noah, Jan. 9, 2008.

Hostetler, Delbert and LaVera (Herschberger), Amboy, IN, third child and son, Brice Lynn, Nov. 25, 2007.

King, Mahlon and Marlene (Beachy), New Holland, PA, third child, first dau., LeAnne Martha, Dec. 4, 2007.

Knepp, Stanley and Shannon (Yoder), Loogootee, IN, third child and son, Darius Andrew, Dec. 23, 2007.

Kuhns, Mark and Jenni (Herschberger), Sullivan, IL, first child and dau., Brianne Renae, Jan. 8, 2008.

Kuhns, Vernon and Christina (Gingerich), Lovington, IL, second child and dau., Jessica Elyse, Dec. 30, 2007.

Lapp, Joe and Julia (Mast), New Holland, PA, fifth child, fourth dau., Alayna Glorianne, Dec. 18, 2007.

Miller, Jason and Ruth (Beachy), Concord, AR, eleventh child, fifth dau., Kuria Raye, Nov. 16, 2007.

Miller, Marcus and Lisa (Gingerich), Kokomo, IN, fifth child, second son, Timothy Marc, Nov. 3, 2007.

Miller, Matthew and Abigail (Miller), East Rochester, OH, third child, (one son deceased), second son, Juda Adrian Matthew, Dec. 21, 2007.

Nisly, Lee and Yvonne (Gingerich), Hutchinson, KS, third child, second son, Cameron Reece, Jan. 4, 2008.

Otto, Marcus and Wende (Graber), Bunker Hill, IN, second child and son, Dawson Grant, Dec. 18, 2007.

Peachey, David and Martha (Schlabach), Kiev, Ukraine, third child, second son, Jadon Lavern, Nov. 29, 2007.

Peachey, Wilmer and Vera (Byler), Ellisburg, NY, tenth child, sixth dau., Victoria Faith, Aug. 24, 2007.

Petersheim, Mark and Mary Lois (Schnupp), Dryden, ON, fourth child, first son, Matthew Noel, Jan. 1, 2008.

Sharp, Daniel and Karen (Miller), Belleville, PA, seventh child, fifth son, Benjamin Noah, Jan. 7, 2008.

Stoltzfus, Ben and Marian (Beiler), Cayo, Belize, twelfth child, fourth son, (one daughter in heaven), Miguel Elisha, October 28, 2007.

Stoltzfus, David and Leah (King), Nakuru, Kenya, seventh child, sixth dau., Emily Rose, Dec. 1, 2007.

Stutzman, Danny and Monica (Schrock), Dade City, FL, sixth child, fifth dau., Lela Danielle, Jan. 14, 2008.

Stutzman, John and Bertha (Troyer), Plain City, OH, second child and dau., Kendra Nicole, Nov. 15, 2007.

Yoder, David and Wanda (Weaver), Sarasota, FL, first child and dau., Tiffany Renae, Dec. 26, 2007.

obituaries

Gerber, Ohmer, 91, died at Nithview Home, New Hamburg, ON, Dec. 27, 2007. He was born August 17, 1916, in Wilmot Township, son of the late Solomon and Laura (Leis) Gerber.

He was a member of Cedar Grove A.M. Church.

On Oct. 5, 1939, he was married to Sarah Roth, who died Nov. 14, 2002. Children surviving are: Ralph (Joanne) Gerber, Shakespeare; Kenneth (Linda) Gerber, Wellesley; Marie (Sam) Assad, Drayton; Orville (Bonnie) Gerber, Shakespeare; Floyd (Pat) Gerber, Wellesley; Rosella (Jim) Leis, Brunner; Marilyn (Leonard) Hammer, Dryden; and Evelyn (Richard) Cook, Wellesley. Also surviving are 24 grandchildren and 18 great grandchildren; sisters-in-law: Mary (Amos) Gerber and Eva (Solomon) Gerber and a sister, Sarah (Ralph) Leis.

Preceding him in death were one infant son, Gordon, and a number of brothers, sisters and in-laws.

The funeral was held on Dec. 29, at Cedar Grove, with Arthur Gerber in charge. Burial was in the church cemetery.

Kauffman, Arlene Marie, 42, of Grantsville, MD, died Dec. 28, 2007, at

Yoder, John David and Judy (Jones), Pratts, VA, fourth child, first son, Travis Jay, Jan. 18, 2008.

Yoder, Marlin and Marsha (Frey), La-Grange, IN, third child, second son, Marion Lynn, Dec. 25, 2007.

home. She was born August 7, 1965, the daughter of Joseph and Matilda (Peter-sheim) Kauffman.

She was baptized in her youth and was a faithful member of Mountain View Mennonite Church, in spite of missing many church services and activities because of poor health.

Surviving are four brothers: Alton (Barbara) Kauffman, Evart, MI; James (Joanna) Kauffman; Danny (Regina) Kauffman; and David (Rebecca) Kauffman, all of Bittering, MD; two sisters: Martha (wife of Andrew) Yoder, Bittering, MD; and Miriam (wife of Wesley) Yoder, Grantsville, MD. Also surviving are 15 nieces and 14 nephews. Her 29 nieces and nephews were a bright spot during her many years of physical pain and intense suffering. Her courageous spirit and faith in God in the midst of adversity were an inspiration and challenge to those she met. Her ready smile blessed many people, including the many doctors and nurses who cared for her.

The funeral was held at Mountain View on Dec. 31, with Menno Yoder, Henry Tice, Enos and Roman Kauffman serving. Burial was in the church cemetery.

Miller, Jacob C., 86, of Leola, PA, died Jan. 4, 2008. He was born at Hartville,

OH, Sept. 29, 1921, son of the late John P. and Elizabeth (Yoder) Miller.

He was a member of Weavertown Amish Mennonite Church, Bird-in-Hand.

Jacob was married to Rebecca Lantz April 3, 2004. She survives. He was first married to Malinda Lapp on December 12, 1944. They had five children: Verna (Amos) Esh, Dryden, ON; Leona (Daniel) Peachey, Strasburg; Lloyd (Mary Ann) Miller, Lancaster; Esther (Melvin) Kauffman, Lancaster; and Linda Miller, Leola. Also surviving are 16 grandchildren, and 34 great grandchildren. Other survivors include a sister, Fannie, Mrs. Simeon Stoltzfus, Leola; and a brother, Enos Miller, New Holland; three step sons: Dan Lapp, Ronks; Marvin G. Lapp, Lancaster; John Lapp, Brownstown; one step daughter, Anne (Sam) Blank, Gap; 12 step grandchildren and 16 step great grandchildren.

On Feb. 8, 1962, he was married to Miriam Glick. He was preceded in death by his first wife, Malinda, in 1960 and by his second wife, Miriam, in 2002. Others preceding him in death were sisters: Lizzie Ann Bontrager, and Gertrude Miller and brothers: Peter, Phineas, Erwin, Alfred, William, John and Joseph Miller.

The funeral was held at Weavertown Church on Jan. 7 with Amos Esh, Erwin Yoder and John U. Lapp serving. Burial was in the adjoining cemetery.

Swartzentruber, Esther C., 81, of Grantsville, MD, died unexpectedly January 9, 2008, at Sacred Heart Hospital,

Cumberland, MD. She was born August 6, 1926, daughter of the late Claude and Olive (Tice) Yoder.

Esther was a member of Mountain View Mennonite Church.

She was married to Crist J. Swarzen-truber on June 15, 1947. They celebrated their 60th anniversary in June, 2007. Esther enjoyed sewing as a hobby and designed and sewed kitchen towels and more recently crocheted afghans. She enjoyed interaction and fellowship with young people.

She is survived by her husband, Crist; children: Pauline (wife of Glenn Chad Yoder), Grantsville; and Ken (wife Gloria) Swartzentruber, Meyersdale, PA; four grandchildren; one brother, Henry Yoder, Mt. Joy, PA; and one sister, Elsie Schrock, Smyrna, GA. She was preceded in death by one brother, Edwin Yoder.

The funeral was held at Mt. View on January 12, with Jerry Yoder, and Henry Tice serving. Joe Byler was in charge of the committal at Mountain View Cemetery.

Yoder, Fannie Barbara, 96, of Mifflinburg, PA, died Dec. 5, 2007. She was born July 3, 1911, at Belleville, PA, daughter of the late Joseph E. and Fannie (Detweiler) Sharp.

She was a member of Vicksburg A.M. Church for 50 years.

Surviving are four daughters and three sons-in-law: Elsie and Sam Byler, Mill Creek, PA; Fannie and Alvin Byler, Grove City, MN; Mae Yoder, Mifflinburg; Ruth and Lewis Yoder, Lewisburg, PA; eight sons and seven daughters-in-law: Joseph and Carol Yoder, Woodstock, IL;

Sylvanus and Audrey Yoder, Blue Bell, PA; Urie Yoder, Milton, PA; John and Lucille Yoder, Waynesboro, PA; Lee and Sonja Yoder, Chambersburg, PA; Ivan and Lydia Yoder, Winfield, PA; Mark and Miriam Yoder, Heron, MT; Marvin and Irene Yoder, Winfield, PA; two brothers: David Sharp and John Sharp; two sisters: Lizzie Hostetler and Sadie Byler; 57 grandchildren; 152 great grandchildren and eight great great grandchildren.

In addition to her husband, she was preceded in death by two sons, Jesse and David Yoder, five brothers, Christ, Joseph, Simon Sharp and Jesse Sharp and his twin brother; four grandchildren; and two great grandchildren.

The funeral was held at Vicksburg on Dec. 9, with Titus Hostetler and Anthony Miller serving. Burial was in the church cemetery.

Yoder, Martha E. (Peachey), 69, died at her home at Woodville, NY, May 1, 2007. She formerly lived at Selinsgrove, PA. She was born June 1, 1937, in Belleville, PA, daughter of the late Jonathan C. and Katie Peachey.

She was a member of Northern Light Christian Fellowship, Belleville, NY.

On April 21, 1960, she was married to Jesse J. Yoder. He survives. Other survivors include six children: Mary Ellen and Mark Hostetler, Rock Stream, NY; David Timothy and Arlene Yoder, Munnsville, NY; Julia and Chester Zook, Milroy, PA; Olive and Louie Peachey, Jr., Woodville, NY; Lois and Timothy Yoder, Lewisburg, PA; Jonathan and Brenda Yoder,

Centreville, MI; 33 grandchildren; one brother, Mahlon Peachey, Belleville, PA; and two sisters: Arie Byler, Timewell, IL; and Nannie Peachey, Belleville.

The funeral was held May 5 at Belleville-Henderson School, with Wilmer Peachey, Joseph Peachey, and Enos Kurtz serving. Burial was in the Woodville Cemetery.

Zook, Isaac K., 82, of Gordonville, PA, died Jan. 3, 2008. He was born Jan. 29, 1925, son of the late Amos D. and Annie (King) Zook.

He was a member of Summitview Christian Fellowship, New Holland, PA.

On Nov. 13, 1947, he was married to Leah Z. Fisher. She survives. They observed their sixtieth anniversary only a few weeks before his demise.

Survivors include five children: Aaron (Leah) Zook, Ronks; Daniel (Susan) Zook, Bird-in-Hand; Leon (Sarah) Zook, Gordonville; Anna Ruth (Andy) King, Honey Brook; and Elmer (Susie) Zook, Clymer; 36 grandchildren; 11 great grandchildren; two brothers: Abner (Emma) Zook, Womelsville; Amos (Bonita) Zook, Leola; two sisters: Fannie Stoltzfus, Myerstown; and Barbara (Jacob) Riehl, Lewisburg.

He was preceded in death by three sisters: Anna Mary Zook, Nancy Allgyer, Miriam Zook; and three brothers: Aaron, Elmer and Benjamin Zook.

The funeral was held on January 6, with Leroy Lapp and Lester Gingerich serving. Interment was in the Summitview Church cemetery.

Six ministries that preach the “prosperity gospel” to varying degrees are under investigation.

A person with a likeable personality and a convincing manner may tell their listening television audience what they want to hear. People in difficult circumstances may hear such a person say that, if they give generously to their ministry, God will abundantly bless them for their gift. While such gifts enrich the recipient, it does not necessarily benefit the giver.

It seems fairly common that persons engaged in such tactics live lives that are extravagant and luxurious. Meanwhile, some of their supporters continue to struggle with financial difficulty.

Senator Charles Grassley of Iowa, on the Senate Finance Committee, is leading the probe asking questions about the evangelists’ lavish spending and possible abuses of their tax-exempt status.

The modern-day prosperity movement can largely be traced to Oral Roberts’ teaching. “Health and Wealth” and “Name it and Claim it” have become common terms. (*The Hutchinson News*, 12-29-07)

Oral Roberts’ son, Richard, who headed Oral Roberts’ University, Tulsa, has recently relinquished his leadership position. He is accused of dishonestly using funds. This complaint seems to come mostly from his colleagues within the institution. It seems to me that lessons to be learned from all of this are self-evident.

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Jonas and Anne Beiler are featured in a story in *The Hutchinson News*, 1-6-08. The story is a reprint from *The Washington Post*.

Both Jonas and Anne were born to Amish parents. Anne’s parents joined Weavertown when she was three years old. She grew up there and was a member until her parents joined another church, while she was still in her teens. At age 19, she married Jonas Beiler, 21, who left Amish circles when he was 16. The couple then joined an evangelical Christian church (non-Mennonite) and started a family.

Anne made pretzels that caught on in a big way. Auntie Anne’s Pretzels became an international franchise valued at more than a quarter billion dollars. The business was sold to a distant cousin several years ago. The Beilers are no longer involved with pretzels, but operate a counseling service at Gap, PA. Anne is writing a book that tells their life story, entitled, *Twist of Faith*. Their interest in counseling is traceable to Anne’s bitter personal experience.

The Beilers lost a 19-month-old daughter in a farm accident. The grief caused the parents to grow distant from each other. Jonas calls it “the seven years of silence.” Anne reached out to a trusted pastor for support and counsel. He seduced her then intimidated her into silence. This was not an isolated case. Eventually, his sinful conduct was exposed and he was removed from leadership.

The Beilers sought counsel together and say that it saved their marriage and transformed their lives.

The article says that hurting people, Amish and non-Amish, use the Beilers' counseling service. The Beilers seem eager to share their story. Their interest in helping people is commendable, but it occurs to me that there may be other helpful things to be learned from their experiences.

—The absence of visual non-conformity was attractive to the Beilers.

—The group they joined wants to be seen as more spiritual than many other Christians.

—What blessings could they have had, had they stayed where Anne grew up?

—Had they stayed, they could have maintained a visual identity that reflects New Testament teaching to churches.

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Most of our Amish friends meet for worship in their homes. This has the obvious economic advantage of not having to build a church building. Many of our readers would feel that there are justifiable reasons for having a building specifically designed for church use. This, however, does not cancel the need for responsible Christian stewardship.

I was admittedly jolted at a recent news item reporting the installation of a pipe organ at a cost of \$265,000. This was in an Anabaptist church that within my lifetime permitted only a capella music in worship.

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Associated Press reports that in the

first 10 months of 2007 credit card debt reached a record high of 9.285 billion dollars. This was prior to the holiday spending bulge. (Courtesy Ernest Hochstetler.) Deficit spending has become a serious government and personal problem.

The dollar is losing value against some other currencies. It is a reminder that fiscal irresponsibility does have consequences in reality. Credit card use has become a matter of convenience and, sometimes, necessity. A check or cash is not always accepted.

To pay monthly credit card bills in full does not incur additional cost. But to make smaller payments is to invite financial bondage.

Should any readers of this column be struggling in such a trap, I would suggest that you humbly and wisely seek counsel to make other arrangements, preferably from within the local body of believers.

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Dr. Bishara Awad is a Palestinian Christian who spoke at the Amish-Mennonite Heritage Center in Berlin, Ohio, on 10-27-07. He voiced the concern that certain views of prophecy and the Jews sacrifice justice, equity, and Christian brotherhood on the altar of Zionism. Some of the main points in his outline are shared below:

I. Are the promises [God gave to the Jews] unconditional?

II. Are these promises perpetual, *i.e.*, never- ending?

III. Do Old Testament prophecies relating to the land still have signifi-

cance within the framework of the new covenant?

The Brotherhood Messenger carried this talk in Volume V, Issue 4, December, 2007. Editor Levi P. Miller is willing to provide free copies of this issue to interested people. His address is 10963 Gerber Valley Road, Sugarcreek, OH 44687.

Light Force by Brother Andrew and Al Janssen treats the same concerns extensively. The book has 330 pages and is published by Revell, Grand Rapids, MI.

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Minister's Meeting Messages

This is a condensation of the final message given at the annual Ministers' Meetings, April 3-5, 2007, at Yoder Mennonite Church, in rural Hutchinson, KS. The set of eight cassette 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.

10. The Minister's Relationship to Truth

—Ralph Miller, Stanardsville, VA

I appreciate being part of this group. It's quite overwhelming that the Lord would count me worthy to be part of His family and of this group. We have heard from young men, middle-aged men and older seasoned men. That represents con-

A study involving 1,000 pregnant California women concludes that caffeine intake increases the chance for miscarriage. The women who consumed 200 milligrams or more a day were about twice as likely to miscarry as the control group. That is about the amount of caffeine in two five-ounce cups of coffee. Many sodas and various teas also contain significant amounts of caffeine. (*The Washington Post* and *The Hutchinson News*, (1-21,08) —DLM 

tinuity of thought and truth and that's a blessing. The truth will go on from one generation to the next.

I appreciate the married and the single folks that are here. You all have an important part in the life of the church. I hope no one decided after last evening when Bro. Mark Gingerich spoke about the minorities in the church that minorities are to be pitied until they attain to something better. I'm glad for all the children that are here, as well.

I sensed a spirit of meekness and vulnerability in all of the speakers. They confessed their own need and I do the same.

One of the vehicles in our church parking lot at home has a plate on the front that reads: **TRUTH IS!** That's a complete sentence. I'm glad for that

fact tonight. Truth has always been. Jesus could have said it this way, “Before Abraham was, truth is!” because He said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life.” The truth shall ever be! In a world of lies, fiction, fables, deception, and false doctrine—truth is! In a time of relativism, situational ethics, and many shades of gray there is truth. There is a standard of actuality, rightness, and verity. There is truth. The truth shall stand and is itself a foundation to stand upon.

If Pilate were here and would ask his famous question, “What is truth?” would you be able to answer him? Let us consider a few possible answers.

What is truth? **God is truth.** Deuteronomy 32:4: He is the rock. His work is perfect. All His ways are judgment. He is a God of Truth. He is without iniquity. Just and right is He. Romans 3:4 says, “Let God be true and every man a liar.” Hebrews 6:18 says it’s impossible for God to lie. That’s like saying, Truth originates with God. God is truth.

We read of our enemy in John 8:44, “Ye are of your father, the devil, and the lusts of your father you will do, he was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own, for he is liar and the father of it.” The devil is all false and God is all true.

The Holy Spirit is called the spirit of truth. When Jesus ascended to heaven, He promised that the truth would remain. John 14:16, 17 says, “And I will pray the Father, and he will give you another comforter, that he may abide with you forever, even the spirit of truth whom the world cannot receive because it seeth him not neither knoweth him. But ye know him for he dwelleth with you and shall be in you.” **Jesus is the truth. We have a Trinity of Truth on our side!** Jesus said, “Sanctify them through thy truth, **thy word is truth.**” That is the solid foundation upon which we may build our lives. What a blessing!

We also want to emphasize that we are to be men and women of truth—men and women of our word. We want to maintain scriptural principles while building relationships. Truth is the best foundation for building godly relationships. In every thing we do, we must adhere to principles of truth. Why would we want to build on sand when we can build on something solid?

The Psalmist loved the truth, the word of God. In his time, God’s Word wasn’t as complete as it is today. In Psalm 19:7-9, a wonderful litany of praise for the truth is given, closing with this, “The judgments of the Lord are true, and righteous altogether.”

Psalm 119:151 says, “Thou art near, O Lord, and all thy commandments are truth.”

I am told there are educated critics nowadays (Bible scholars, if you please) who deny the virgin birth of Christ, the resurrection of Christ, and some other miracles. They also conclude that certain parts of the New Testament are not relevant for today. That’s just asking, “Yea, hath God said...?” again. This Word is altogether true. **God said it and that settles it, whether I believe it or not.** May God help us to believe and receive it! Blessed are we as we accept and receive the whole Bible as being true. May that be settled in our minds. It will give us rest and a clear sense of direction.

Proverbs 23:23 says, “Buy the truth and sell it not.” Treasure it like a precious keepsake. There is no money changing hands here, but it is to be treasured greatly. In building relationships, let us build on truth.

In Psalms 117 (the shortest psalm), we read, “The truth of the Lord endureth forever.” Psalm 100 says, “His truth endures to all generations.” We all are getting older and we will one day pass from the scene, but the truth will endure. It will be available to my children and grandchildren.

In 2 Timothy 2:14-16, we have this admonition: “Study to shew

thyself approved unto God....” In the larger context of this Scripture and of building relationships with one another, I ask this question, “Why would we want to waste our time with unprofitable words?” (false words, untrue words, controversial words, arguments—words that don’t build) In verse 16, vain, useless, and empty words are shown as not being worth our time. The Amplified Version says that such teaching undermines and upsets the hearers. Our goal: “Rightly dividing the word of truth.”

Consider the laws of mathematics of truth. When you add something, it becomes more. When you subtract, it becomes less. Revelation 22:18 speaks about adding to or subtracting from the complete Word of God. But when you divide, it doesn’t become less or more. It just distributes it. Even though that’s not the primary meaning here, I like to make that application. There may be about 450 people here. The Lord will distribute the truth according to need, without taking anything away from the Word. I don’t want to add anything to it. That’s unbiblical. We are not called to invent a P.S. to the Bible. We don’t need a new gospel. We just need to correctly divide the Word we have. The Amplified renders this as “correctly analyzing and accurately dividing, rightly

handling, and skillfully teaching the Word of Truth.”

As the Author is the God of Truth, so this word is the Word of Truth. The Greek says for *dividing*: “to make a straight cut,” “to expound correctly,” (in Spanish: “use it well”). We must be careful not to wrest the Scriptures. You have heard it said, “You can make the Scripture say what you want it to say.” That is not honorable. We are not to be making it fit our pre-conceived ideas. Rather, we are to compare Scripture with Scripture; and ask, “What does it say in context?”

In 2 Timothy 2, we see the potential for straying from the truth. In verse 18, “Who, concerning the truth, have erred.” We want to avoid that for ourselves and for our hearers. Some will stray. In the next chapter, we see where some resist the truth. Then in Chapter 4, some turn their ears away from the truth, and are turned unto fables. Nowadays we use the word fiction. Did you analyze your church library lately? What do we reach for most readily—*Calvary Messenger* or *Reader’s Digest*? Which builds us up? Which is more likely to have some mixture of truth and untruth in it?

Am I allowed to ask preachers, “How’s your Bible reading?” Are you reading regularly? plentifully? Are you saturating yourself with truth? Are you giving attendance to reading

it and delighting in it? The best way to deal with fables and false doctrine is to practice the truth.

Ephesians 4:15 speaks of balancing truth and love. Truth that is spoken in anger or contention does not build up. It tears down. When we exhort, our goal is still to speak the truth in love. Even in private conversation, let us ask ourselves: is it kind? will it build up? Do you think my wife would tell you all about the faults she knows I have? Do you think I would declare to you all the faults my sons have? I wouldn’t do that. Let both our speech and our silence be guided by love.

1 John 3:18 says, “My little children, let us not love in word neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth.” (Amplified: “Not merely in theory and in speech, but in practice and in sincerity”) Yes, it’s good to have affirming words of love, but prove it by what we do.

Did Jesus love the Pharisees? In Matthew 23, did He? He said, “Woe unto you, hypocrites.” That same chapter says that when He approached Jerusalem, and realized what would happen to the Pharisees and religious leaders, He wept. “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered you as a hen gathereth her chicks....” Both statements expressed His love.

Which is more important—love or truth? Is it better to have love than truth? Can we not have both? Bro. Ronald said yesterday that he's not fond of compartmentalizing our priorities. I would also say that about this. Psalm 85:10 says that mercy and truth have met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other. I say, "What God has joined together, let not man put asunder."


In 1 Corinthians 13 is this nugget: "Love rejoices in truth." The Christian must never sacrifice truth on the altar of love or vice versa. He must look at things the way they are. If there's a dark side, he is willing to look at it. If there is a bright side, yes, he will see that. Love's optimism is realistic. Take courage, there is not a hopeless case in your church.

Love is not blind to the truth. Does a parent truly love his child if he

never corrects his faults and lets him grow up to be an obnoxious, selfish person? The love we speak of sees the truth and knows the truth, but is not discouraged.

John uses the word truth 48 times in his writings. In the first six verses of his second epistle, **truth** appears five times; **love** appears four times. Walking in the truth is the emphasis here.

Let us note three causes for rejoicing in 2 and 3 John: When I am walking in the truth, then I am free from the bondage of sin. When our children walk in truth, our hearts rejoice. When our brothers and sisters in the Lord walk in the truth, what a cause of rejoicing!

Truth should be acknowledged, spoken, believed, obeyed, rightly divided, manifested in our walk, and form the basis of our unity. God's truth is the basis for our unity. The truth goes marching on and shall prevail. 

HUMAN BEINGS ARE HAPPY

only when they strive

for something worthwhile.

The Sunset in the West

Roger Stoltzfus, Rock Springs, TN

Of the many wondrous beauties,
From the landscape, birds, or trees;
Or of dainty little insects,
And of wonders of the seas;
There is one that is so gorgeous—
Seems superior to the rest—
'Tis the brilliant, awesome splendor
Of the sunset in the west!

What magnificence and splendor,
When the heavens are aflame!
Pink clouds trimmed with golden linings—
I just need to praise His Name!
And the blazing brilliance tells us,
As the sun slips 'neath the crest;
That there'll be a bright tomorrow,
For the sunset's in the west. *

Of the beauty is but fleeting,
And the colors fade so fast;
It reminds me that we're pilgrims,
And our days will soon be past.
If the sky is gray and dark'ning,
Then I fear to look now, lest,
When the day is almost ended,
There's no sunset in the west.*

Lives remind me of the sunsets:
Some lives glow with added hue;
Others seem so sad and troubled—
They have clouds and tempests, too.

**Matthew 16:2*


Character is formed by habits:
Changing now's the easiest;
Let's not wait till we're much older,
'Til the sunset's in the west

What is it that makes the difference,
That some lives with luster glow?
Are they gentle, pure, and holy,
'Cause they love the Master so?
Now we need to shine for Jesus,
While the day is at its best;
For we're all advancing onward,
T'ward the sunset in the west.

As I think of aged pilgrims,
And of martyrs in the past,
How their lives were bright for Jesus:
They were true till death, at last;
And how forces of great evil
Joined to put them to the test;
Yet their lives revealed such colors,
Like rich sunsets in the west.

Though sometimes the sky is cloudy,
And we don't know what to do;
We can stop and ask the Savior
Just to let His sun shine through!
As my eye reveals the morrow,
Ere my body's laid to rest,
Will my Lord, and others notice
Any sunset in the west?

From *The Timely Truth*, Jan., 2008.

Used by permission. 

Deception

David Wagoner, Cutler, IN

A split second after seeing a movement out of the corner of my eye, there came a loud THUMP from the living room window. Most of us have probably heard small birds hitting a window, but this was much louder. Upon looking out, we saw a red-tailed hawk down on the ground with its head lolling around like its neck was rubber.

I hurried out to catch it before it regained its senses, but when I got there, it was already gone. My wife pointed into the sky and there it was—already about a quarter mile away and picking up speed.


It's not too unusual for a sparrow to be deceived by a reflection in a window, possibly because they are less fearful of close contact with humans and, consequently, more often collide with deceptive windows. However,

hawks tend to be in less populated areas and rarely close enough to a house to be deceived by a reflective window.

Hawks or Sparrows?

We, as a brotherhood, are more like the hawk in that we strive to steer clear of the world and its deceptions. Romans 13:14 says, “But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof.” Are we making provision for the flesh if we are like the sparrows and become comfortable living close to the world?

When we run into something deceptive, let's be like the hawk. Before the devil has a chance to catch us, let's regain our senses and get away from him with all the speed we can muster!

[From *The Vindicator*, January, 2008. Used with permission.] 

The Gift of Silence

Maria (Miller) Rockhill, Lisbon, NY

Lord, our lives are noise and clamor, Every moment rife with choice.
In the din, our hearing weakens. Oft we miss your still, small voice.

So, in love, You speak a language, We more clearly understand.
In the eloquence of silence, You proceed to show your hand.


Wiping tears in speechless wonder, Parents gaze in rapt delight,
At your gift of life: their newborn, While their shouting hearts unite.

Slowed by illness, now we ponder, Watch as pristine snowflakes fall,
Soundless, their symphonic sparkle, Swells your praise, the Lord of all.

Tear-stained mother kneels in silence, Praying for her erring son.
Wrestling, then your Word speaks clearly, "Not my will, but Thine be done."

Pensive family watches, anguished, As a loved one draws each breath.
Waiting as the silence deafens, For your strong, clear call of death.

Soft the soul in true repentance, Seeks forgiveness for his ways.
Gift unspeakable You give him. Loud erupts the angels' praise.

Lord, your voice resounds in silence, Speaking lovingly and clear.
Teaching us, in joy or sorrow, What we truly need to hear. 

mission awareness

John (1907-1934) and Elizabeth (Betty) (1906-1934) Stam

Gail Q. Emerson, Harrisonburg, VA

The time is early morning. The clump of dark green pine trees stands tall and silent amid the scene of dread and impending death. The onlookers have lost their courage as they watch the ruthless Communist soldiers. The place: China. The date: December 8, 1934.

John Stam, the seventh child and fifth son of nine children was born in 1907 to a Dutch immigrant to the United States. His father established the Star of Hope Mission and it was

there that John received training in street evangelism. In order to prepare himself further for the Lord's service, John enrolled at Moody Bible Institute. He took missions and general courses and was a good student, a well-rounded, mature Christian. It was thought that this life would some day have a significant impact. How true that came to be! He committed his financial needs to the Lord while holding down a job in school and the Lord faithfully and miraculously provided.

John became acquainted with Betty

Alden Scott in a China Inland Mission prayer group at Moody. Their common interest in China drew them together. Betty was born in Albion, Michigan, before her parents left for China as missionaries. Betty's other four brothers and sisters eventually all became missionaries as well.

Betty went to China as a single missionary in the fall of 1931 to work with women and children. John was officially accepted by the China Inland Mission Board in July of 1932 and subsequently went to China. China was already a dangerous place due to political unrest but there was revival among believers.

John and Betty were married in China on October 25, 1933. They were blessed with the birth of a daughter, Helen Priscilla, on September 11, 1934. Both John and Betty were dedicated to the Lord and had a very personal relationship with Him. They wanted to evangelize the Chinese people. They desired for people to see the reality of Jesus Christ through their lives. Betty had said she wanted to invest her life in something worthwhile. They spent their time in China doing just that—showing Christ's love and taking every opportunity to evangelize the people of Tsingteh. They had gone to the city of Tsingteh to minister after having been assured that it was relatively

safe. They were much loved by the Chinese people.

December 5, 1934, was the last full day they spent together in their home. Shortly before his death John had written a magazine article with the theme, "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit" (John 12:24). Those words of the Lord before His death proved to be prophetic for John and Betty. They were ready to serve the Lord whatever the cost and their faith would soon be tested under extreme pressure.

On December 6, the city of Tsingteh was quickly captured by Communist troops without much warning. There was no time for escape. John and Betty immediately knelt in prayer with their Chinese women servants. They showed love and hospitality to the soldiers who entered their home but to no avail. John was taken prisoner, as were Betty and the baby, shortly after his arrest. After John was taken away Betty made what provisions she could for herself and the child, even placing diapers and money in the baby's blanket to be used in her care. Before leaving she made mention of the fact to the servant women that they could take care of little Helen Priscilla if anything happened to her and John.

In his letter penned quickly to the


China Inland Mission before his capture, John noted that he and Betty had peace in their hearts. He closed with the request that God would be glorified whether by life or death.

On the morning of December 8, 1934, John and Betty were beheaded for their faith in the Lord. Their baby, Helen Priscilla, was miraculously taken out of the country and returned to her grandparents by loving Chi-

nese Christians.

At their memorial service at Moody Bible Institute seven hundred students stood to dedicate their lives to missionary service wherever God would choose.

John and Betty's greatest desire was fulfilled—to bring glory to God by life or by death.

From *The Sword and Trumpet*, January, 2002. Used by permission. 

helpers at home

Entertaining Cross-Culturally

Mary June Glick

Let brotherly love continue. Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares" (Hebrews 13:1, 2).

God brings people into our lives so we can show to them His love. I was recently challenged by a sermon with the thought of "looking through the eyes of Jesus." Jesus was filled with compassion for those in need: the sinner, and the person who has emotional and physical hurts. He did not condemn those with different skin color or nationality. If He would have, we would be condemned. Jesus met their need by identifying with them, and by loving and caring for them.

Who are strangers in my life?

We are living in a time when people from many nationalities live in our communities. We may have neighbors from Central America or South America, Africa, India or wherever. No longer can we meet them only in their countries, but we can share the Gospel with them right here in the United States.

How do we respond to them? Do we see them as people like us or are we only conscious of their skin color, their foreign accent or their way of dress? Are we guilty of making negative comments about the foreigners we see in our local stores and places of business? Do we look at these

people through the eyes of Jesus?


Many of these people find our country and our ways very strange and frustrating. The large variety of choices in the grocery stores is overwhelming to them. They may not understand how to handle a checkbook, let alone a credit card. Some have come from refugee camps with only the clothes on their backs. I know of refugees who have come to our northern cities in the middle of winter with no shoes or winter clothes. We may have neighbors whose skin color is different from ours. Do we remember that “God has made of one blood all nations of men”? (Acts 17:26a). The strangers God calls us to meet may be those in extreme poverty. In one case, at first I found her repulsive, but after spending time with her, I wondered why I had felt that way. I soon realized it was not she that changed, but I had changed simply because I learned to love and see her through the eyes of Jesus.

How can I entertain these strangers that God brings into my life?

Women have many opportunities to meet needs. We have a God-given sense that allows us to be sensitive to needs in the lives of others. We can develop this sensitivity by reaching out to those around us with love and compassion.

Where do you begin? You can share a smile and a kind word with the stranger at the supermarket. Take an interest in her children. If you speak Spanish, use it to connect with the Hispanic woman. Our daughter-in-law is from Mexico and she loves when someone speaks her language, even if it's not perfect Spanish.

Visit your neighbors; take them a loaf of warm bread or a plate of cookies. Find a point of interest to connect. Our El Salvadoran neighbors were amazed that my husband can swing a machete as well as they can. That, of course, opened instant communication. Accept a cup of tea or coffee from them or invite them over for a cup. Offer to take them to the doctor or to buy groceries, if they don't own a vehicle. If they are new to this country, be aware of their material needs, such as a warm comforter from your sewing circle.

Older people will just be glad for a visit. I have learned through the years not to be in a hurry when I visit the elderly. We can also learn from strangers; our way is not better, just different, from theirs. They have much to teach us if we are willing to learn. Each of us has gifts and talents that we are comfortable with. We can use these to minister to the stranger. We never know when that stranger is an “angel unawares.” 

What Was It Like?

Anita Yoder, Ligonier, IN

Noises mingled on a hill
Pharisees mocking,
“He saved others, himself He cannot save.”
Christ spoke grace to those who put Him there;
To the thief beside Him—
And for His mother.

What was it like?


Listen to those last sad words,
As He cries out,
“Oh, God, why have You forsaken Me?”
the man on the middle cross is crying.
God forsaking His Son?
Jesus pierces the darkness
with earth’s loneliest question.

What was it like?

Supernatural darkness hung;
People wonder,
“Where is the sun; why this noonday night?”
On the cross Jesus gave His life
so that a temple sacrifice
is no longer needed.

What was it like?

God allowed it, even planned it,
And Jesus said,
“Treat Me as you’d treat a lamb.”
Even though it broke
the heart of God.
His blood washes away my sin.

**So I don’t have to go through condemnation,
desolation, and darkness.** 



A real friend will tell you your faults and follies in times of prosperity
and will assist you with his
hand in times of adversity.

youth messages

Dear Youth,

Businessmen, ministers, parents, and youth discover that busyness is a deterrent to vision and creativity. The age in which we live tends to dictate our schedules

and our priorities. It need not be this way. We can prepare for busy seasons. A big “thank-you” to the youth who contributed this month!

—EE

This Month's QUESTION

Lack of planning hinders creativity, especially during busy seasons! How can young people prepare themselves spiritually for a rewarding, God-honoring spring and summer?

response from our readers ...

I believe the best way to start preparing yourself for a rewarding summer is to really get to know God. I know that is an obvious answer, but it is so, so true. There's nothing that can compare to what happens when we seek God and He begins to change us from the inside out. You

will seek Him and FIND Him when you search for Him with ALL your heart. (Jeremiah 29:13) Start praying about your summer now.

One rewarding way to spend your summer is to get out of your comfort zone—way out. There are some amazing ways God can stretch and

grow us when we are out of “normality.” Ask God to take you somewhere out of your comfort zone. And most likely, He will!

I challenge you to spend your summer not just accumulating treasure on earth, but living for what really matters. There are so many people in the world today who are longing to know the truth that you know! They need someone to tell them. Will you spend your summer building God’s kingdom...or your own?

—Sharita King, New Holland, PA

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In this era of seemingly endless time-consuming opportunities, I am finding that I can no longer expect to somehow find time for important activities. God allows everyone the same amount of time in a day and it is our decision as to how we use this time. We need to consciously make priorities for our life.

I struggle to find personal devotional time with God especially during busy seasons. In the morning I am often too rushed, and in the evening tiredness takes over. We need a relationship but no relationship flourishes under these conditions. Different Bible reading/study plans work differently for different people; the important part is that we employ a plan. Planning a daily devotional time at the beginning

of the year and sticking with that plan throughout the year leads to a closer relationship with God and more enjoyment of life.

Summertime usually has many ministry opportunities that young people can experience. Involvement in short-term ministries such as summer camps or vacation Bible schools can refresh youth, broadens our horizons, help us grow spiritually, and gives us a necessary escape from the routine of “everyday life.” The opportunities exist; we simply need to sacrifice some time and “seize the day.”

—Josh Nisley, Meadville, PA

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Preparing yourself spiritually is a very important part of Christian life. We need to get involved in Christian activity through the church or other Christian groups. Getting prayer groups together and standing together as one body of Christ is a great help to one’s spiritual life. We should set standards according to the Bible that will keep temptation down to minimum in our everyday life, so when things turn up, we don’t have to try quickly to decide if something is right or wrong. With the prayer groups having Bible study and continually reading in God’s Word is a great help and gain to one’s spiritual life. It’s just like a

camp fire—if you have a couple of glowing hot coals and you take one out of the circle and put it out on its own, its fire will dwindle down quickly and become very cold. But if you put that coal back in the campfire, it will soon be burning nice and hot again.

The campfire represents Christian fellowship and the coals represent the Christians themselves. Some good activities to plan for the summer are helping needy people and possibly doing fundraisers to help out on missions. By planning ahead, we can hopefully be more effective in doing God's Work rather than just doing it quickly and carelessly.

Passing out tracts, going door to door, or just plain living for Christ in our everyday life is so important I can't stress it enough. Without planning ahead, we may never get "around to it" and before we know it, our spring and summer are gone, along with many missed opportunities to bless and honor our God. That is why it's important to always plan ahead and have goals to reach because without a vision—what is life?

I wish everyone a joyous and blessed year. God bless you!

—Leon Beachy, Dundee, OH

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I think one way to prepare yourself

for a God-honoring spring/summer is go face it with the right mindset. If you aim to enjoy yourself and focus on doing a lot of fun things, then that's probably pretty much all you will get out of it. But if you cultivate an awareness of God in everything you do—in the hard work and the fun times, then you'll have a much more fulfilling summer.

Also, if it's possible, you could plan some sort of ministry into your summer. You could get involved either in a Vacation Bible school, join a relief team, or maybe take a mission trip.

—Evelyn Swarey, Greenville, VA

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Farmers especially find themselves busy with tilling and planting, which may keep them up late, and away from Wednesday evening church. Preparing ahead to take off for church would be a good goal. Another way to prepare is to make a New Year's resolution to help a certain number of people, or to be personally involved in a Bible club, or some other church ministry.

—Thomas Gerber, Wellesley, ON

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If you set your priorities in line with God and His Word, you can help block out the distractions of a busy life and schedule. By being filled through and through with God's Spirit, He can help

you discern what is right and what is wrong for your life as you plan according to His will for the future as well as you live out the “here and now.”

Could this possibly include not going to your favorite basketball or volleyball game because God led you to go visit someone who is lonely? Or could it mean that God is calling you to stay home from a long-anticipated vacation because you’ve been gone almost every night for two weeks? To help you set your priorities straight, you could ask yourself, “Does this really matter in light of eternity?” Discern within your heart right now to be open and listen to God’s voice when He has a different plan for your life than you were thinking.

I am currently on our youth committee, and this question made me ponder the fact of how responsible we are as a committee to plan wholesome activities that involve reaching out to those around us. Many people are in need of God, many are lonely, many are hurting, and this is a great opportunity for the youth to get involved in the community and receive

many rewards. I challenge all those who also help plan the youth activities of your community to take this seriously.

—Krissa Graber, Amboy, IN

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To be able to prepare ourselves spiritually for a God-honoring spring and summer, I think we first need to have a right relationship with God. Then only, can we properly prepare ourselves for a God-honoring spring and summer.

A couple of ways we can prepare ourselves spiritually include reading the Bible and praying. We can become stronger Christians when we spend time studying God’s Word and communicating with Him.

Another way we can prepare ourselves spiritually is by committing every area of our life to God and being willing to be used of Him. If we are willing to do the things that God might ask of us this year, we will have a rewarding, God-honoring year.

—Elmer Kuhns, Arthur, IL

Next Month’s QUESTION

**What happens in communities and churches
when people are *BIG* and God is *small*?**

Please respond by March 15. Thank you. 

THOUGHT GEMS

We rate nobility in men by what they finish,
not by what they attempt.

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It is often better to look where you're going
than to gaze at where you've been.

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The smallest good deed done is better than the
grandest good intention.

• • • • •

The measure of man is not what he gets from his ancestors,
but what he leaves his descendants.

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The world's least satisfied hunger is the hunger for appreciation.

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An egotist is like a ship in a fog—always blowing his horn.

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When you're up to your ears in trouble, try using the
part that isn't submerged.

• • • • •

A budget is what you stay within by going without.

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