



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

Galatians 6:14

J U N E 2 0 0 8

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June 2008

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

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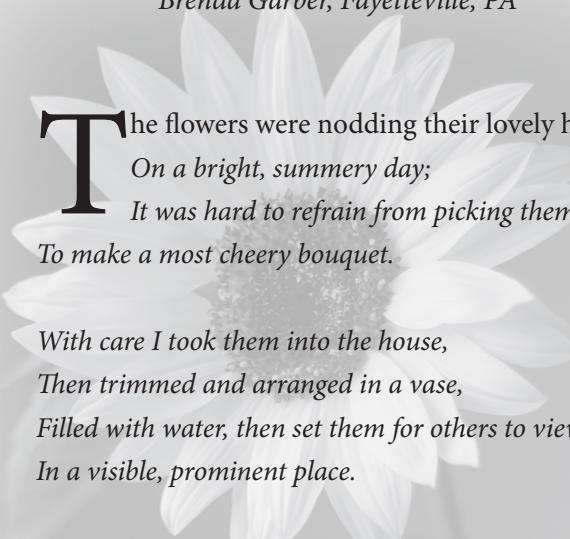
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Blooms for the Master in Vessels of Clay

Brenda Garber, Fayetteville, PA

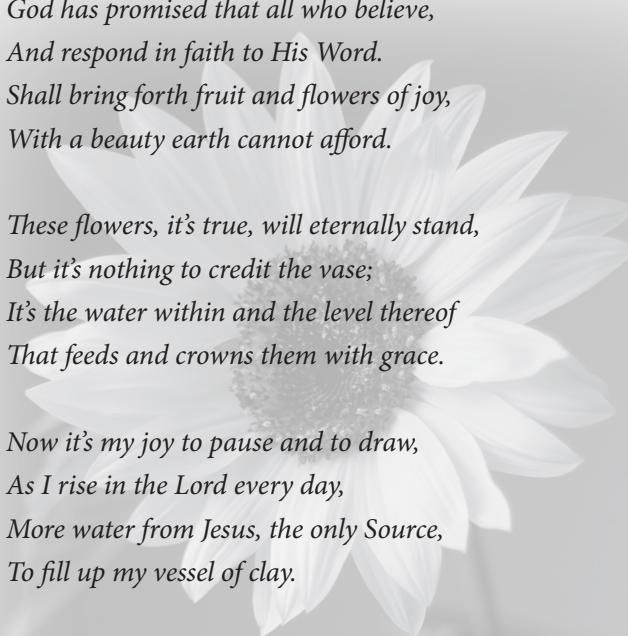

The flowers were nodding their lovely heads,
On a bright, summery day;
It was hard to refrain from picking them all,
To make a most cheery bouquet.

With care I took them into the house,
Then trimmed and arranged in a vase,
Filled with water, then set them for others to view,
In a visible, prominent place.

Within days, I noticed their brightness was gone,
And their soft heads drooping, forlorn;
The water was low and I, in neglect,
Had failed to add e'en a drop more.

Now the water I put in my vase was just such,
And the flowers were but mortal blooms;
But they point us to truths that are only the kind
To be found in uplifting rooms.

We know that we, who believe in the Lord,
Are vessels formed by His hand,
To hold the great thirst-quenching water of life,
God's Spirit abiding in man.



*God has promised that all who believe,
And respond in faith to His Word.
Shall bring forth fruit and flowers of joy,
With a beauty earth cannot afford.*

*These flowers, it's true, will eternally stand,
But it's nothing to credit the vase;
It's the water within and the level thereof
That feeds and crowns them with grace.*

*Now it's my joy to pause and to draw,
As I rise in the Lord every day,
More water from Jesus, the only Source,
To fill up my vessel of clay.*

*I know by His Word that the blooms need not fade,
Nor must they less lovely grow,
If I can but keep my vessel supplied,
And don't let the water get low.*

*Nor will it do harm to these flowers of grace,
If my lot be a room that seems dark;
Or if those nearby, my bright blooms disdain,
Or my vessel is crippled and marked.*

*It matters not in what room I am placed,
Nor how lovely a vessel I be;
But the blooms and the water, the water of life,
Must all point to the Lord's majesty.*

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



GUEST EDITORIAL

Pentecost: *The Curse of Babel Reversed*

Ervin N. Hershberger (1914-2003)

(Founding Editor of *Calvary Messenger*)

At Babel (Genesis 11:1-9), everybody spoke the same language. They were all of one mind; everybody understood everybody else, and their focus was fixed on common goals: self-preservation and making for themselves “a name.” Their solution was a city for unified and fortified security, and a tower reaching unto heaven (just in case God might do a “rerun” of the flood). Unity of mind can be ideal, but when it conflicts with God’s will it may be mass suicide.

In this case God intercepted their plans by confounding their language. Suddenly no one could understand anybody. What confusion—utter chaos! “And from thence did the Lord scatter them abroad upon the face of the earth” (v. 9b).

Pentecost was just the opposite. “There were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, *out of every nation under heaven*” (Acts 2:5). But, at the end of a ten-day prayer meeting, when the Holy Spirit filled the

hundred and twenty assembled in that upper room, everybody clearly understood all those who were Spirit-filled. The account names seventeen nationalities with a conglomeration of languages, yet “every man heard them speak *in his own language*” (v. 6), “...every man in our own tongue, *wherein we were born*” (v. 8).

At Babel they were all dumbfounded by the utter confusion; at Pentecost they were all startled by the total clarity of understanding! Not only did they understand the words verbally, but so clearly did they get the message that three thousand were converted that same day (v. 41). They not only responded to an altar call by emotional persuasion, but “they *continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers*” (v. 42).

Apparently some Christians in the same constituency, the same community, and in the same congregation are unable (or unwilling) to understand each other. The problem

is not in our spoken languages. It begins with unspoken attitudes, which develop into feelings and words that finally sprout into *swords*. The bitter fruit of misunderstandings is divisive attitudes and the resulting fragmentation in our churches.

The consecutive order of the sacred events we commemorate annually, never changes: Gethsemane and Calvary MUST precede the

Resurrection, and a true Pentecost clinches the fact of a Resurrection. If and when every Christian experiences a genuine Gethsemane, a true crucifixion of self (Romans 6:6), a spiritual resurrection with Christ (v. 5), and a real infilling of the Holy Spirit, our spiritual “Babel” should be transformed into a victorious “Pentecost.”

[From the editorial, June, 1987] 

reader response

Re: The Credit Card Crunch, April, 2008, p.5.

I enjoyed this article in the last issue of Calvary Messenger. I believe, however, we mistakenly confuse the terms “lender” and “borrower,” perhaps due to our PA German, which uses the same verb, *layna*, for both borrowing and lending.

Note in the fourth paragraph, this sentence: “These organizations would routinely look at the lender’s (it should say borrower’s) assets and liabilities....” [Two more such errors are noted. –PLM]

Name withheld by request

Editor’s response: She’s right. We must try to do better. Furthermore, I believe the article in question contains a message so valuable it should be made into a tract for wider distribution. In making it into a tract,

we will, however, do our best to place the terms “borrower” and “lender” and “loaning” and “borrowing” in their proper places! Thank you for writing, Sister.

Re: Unconditional Eternal Security, April, p. 9.

I agree with most of what writer Larry Gembicki said. It is true that some who believe in eternal security do so while maintaining this facetious version: “Free from the law, O happy condition. Now I can sin, for I have permission.”

Others who believe in eternal security maintain the Bible’s priority on holy living. Hebrews 12:14 says, “Pursue...holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.”

There are three kinds of faith:
Dead faith (faith without works).
Demonic faith (the demons believe

and tremble, so one can believe many true things about God and even emotionally “tremble” but not be saved).

Dynamic faith. (“I will show you by my works.” Imputed righteousness produces practical righteousness).

The only evidence of a regenerate heart is a changed life. (2 Corinthians 5:17) If a person claims to have believed in Christ, but there is no change of life, he is not really saved. If a person claims to have believed in Christ and lives a life consistent with that claim for a while, but then changes and begins to demonstrate a hard heart toward God and live in rebellion against God, there is a real possibility that he was never saved...

If one who is truly saved falls deeply into sin, he will experience the discipline of God. If a person thinks he has trusted Christ to save him, but sees that his life is not bearing spiritual fruit, he should examine himself, to see if he is in the faith (2 Corinthians 13:5)...

A person who has truly experienced God’s grace and salvation loves God and wants to serve and obey Him. His understanding of the eternal death he deserved as the punishment for his sins, and the great miracle of God’s grace through Christ is sufficient motivation to love and serve Him throughout his life. The love of Christ constrains him to be faithful, even to martyrdom. (2 Corinthians 5:14)...

Lois Snyder, Wichita, KS 

Let The Mud Dry

Simon Schrock, Catlett, VA

Life brings surprises. Some are welcome and some are not. Most surprises are what we make of them.

One day I walked into our bedroom and discovered our muddy dog lying on the carpet. The weather was unpleasant for a dog that hates storms. He found an unlatched door, pushed against it and squeezed inside, and there he was: comfortably

relaxed on our new carpet with his muddy feet. Muddy pawprints decorated the carpet.

Wet mud on the carpet did not set well with me or my wife, Polly. My anger rose in an instant. I promptly attempted to get the dog out with not the kindest tone of voice. This old dog with stiff joints (like Great Grandma’s arthritis) did not accept my commands well. It responded

with its own anger. My immediate reaction was to get the dog out of there and start cleaning up the mess with soap and water.

Then I remembered a devotional I had read some decades ago in *Our Daily Bread*. “An insult is like mud; it will brush off much better when it’s dry. Wait a little till you are cool and the problem will be more easily resolved.” So I lowered my intensity and soon persuaded the dog to go outside. I explained to Polly that we should let the mud dry before we try to remove it. Then I would use the vacuum sweeper. That’s what I did and the mud tracks disappeared without leaving stains on the carpet.

Along the road of life we meet many unexpected situations. We become annoyed when our plans are interrupted, our schedules diverted, and we don’t get what we hope for. Leaders do not always do what you like and meetings do not always accomplish hoped-for goals. When others do not meet our expectations, we may let it become “mud on our personal carpets.” Some tracks are innocent and some are not. Human reaction without a prayerful, thought-through response often drives “the mud” deeper. My quick reaction to someone’s mud may cause long-term hurts and unresolved regrets, both for myself and the other person.

Examples I Have Seen

I remember the driver who met

an unexpected vehicle that became a desperate situation on the busy road outside our office. When another driver made the wrong move, his vehicle overturned and rested on its top just yards from our front entrance door. The driver crawled out alive, but in a rage of anger. His anger turned an unfortunate situation into a heated chase. He was so angry that the police had to restrain him. Instead of being thankful to be alive, his response of anger “muddied” the whole situation.

A close friend came with an unsigned note he had found placed in his truck accusing him of sinful behaviors. The accusations were false. The note carried a tone of vengefulness rather than divine love. It left painful marks that a vacuum cleaner could not remove and that even speaking the truth in love failed to resolve. (Ephesians 4:15)

I think of my minister friends who have received notes, epistles, and stern lectures with accusations that felt more like explosions of anger than pleas from a “broken spirit, and contrite heart” (Psalm 51:17). Nevertheless, the messages left their mark and perhaps deep stains. Ministers cannot do everything to suit everybody. And yes, we do leave our tracks on some toes. However, your response may rub the mud deeper in both your life and the one being confronted, which can leave lifelong stains.

How To Avoid Damage

Anger is an inherited emotion. When it is out of control, it can track a lot of damaging mud into people's lives. A common expression of anger is, "That made me mad!" It was not easy for me to learn that responding in anger is a choice that I make. It is simply not accurate to say, "That made me mad." It is more truthful to say, "I chose to respond with expressed anger." To say, "That made me mad" acknowledges that circumstances control your responses and behavior. What is it that stirs our anger? What happened that we chose to respond with rage? What happens when someone crosses our nice, routine path; when someone gets too close to our well-guarded vice; or when things don't go the way we wanted them to?

Somebody tracked mud into your life, your plans, your expectation, your hopes, your dreams. They didn't deliver what you wanted and expected. You feel the heat of anger flowing to your face. You write a scalding epistle or an angry note, send a hasty e-mail, or make a quick phone call. Before you tap the send button, put on the stamp, release the anonymous note, or dial the last digit, consider some advice from Solomon: "Do you see a man who is hasty in his words, there is more hope for a fool than for him" (Proverbs 29:20 NAS). "An angry man stirs up strife, and a hot tempered man abounds

in transgression" (Proverbs 29:22 NAS).

I think of my own angry responses. As I recall some of my choices in anger, I am also reminded from Scripture that man's anger does not promote the righteousness God wants to see in believers. "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath. For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God" (James 1:19,20). The Amplified Bible renders it this way: "For a man's anger does not promote the righteousness God wishes and requires."

Exploded anger is not the only response that muddies our relationships. *Repressed anger* can sulk and turn sullen and decide to have nothing to do with the offender. That, too, leaves its ugly stains. Sometimes repressed anger leaves the church and goes elsewhere without a brotherly discussion on what the offense has been. Or it just turns into "arm's length" fellowship. This, too, does not promote the righteousness of God.

The dog tracked mud on the carpet. I responded with expressed anger; so did the dog. I chose to cool it, help the dog leave, and let the mud dry. Today there are no stains left on the carpet. When someone leaves tracks on your nice clean path, ask yourself, "Will my response help bring the righteousness of God or will I spread mud that leaves lifelong stains?"



A Money Message for Young People

Aaron Lapp, Kinzers, PA

A feature column in our daily newspaper carried this headline for a recent article, "Right and Easy Paths Rarely Intersect." Jeff Hawkes was writing from a secular viewpoint, but made a point applicable to our spiritual lives. He wrote, "The child in us, after all, hates inconvenience, wants comfort, avoids the hard tasks—none of it conducive to choosing the right thing. But then the consequences of doing the wrong thing have a way of getting our attention."

Young people, I cannot tell you how many middle-aged and older men have said they wish they would've known biblical principles about finances when they were young. This assumes, of course, that they would then have followed those principles in making financial decisions.

We often hear it said that hindsight is better than foresight. Talk about having a keen sense of the obvious! Watch this: Accepting the counsel of someone else's hindsight can be your fortunate foresight! A great way to capitalize on some truly free stuff!

Life is not meant to be hard or complicated. Today's average American lifestyle is both of these,

plus a loss of freedom, both morally and financially, to say nothing about the spiritual bondage it entails. Traced back to its origins, it points back to starting out wrong. Twisted reasoning supposes that wrong can eventually end up being right where you want to be. Life's rewards don't work out that way.

The opportunities for great success for our young people of today are probably greater than ever. There are many more options from which to choose. Being informed becomes critically important, surpassed only by the need for wisdom to make sensible and strategic choices.

The goal of the "worldling" is to be *happy and rich*. The goal of this article is to help you be *faithful and wise*. Here I offer eight values, in brief, by which Christian youth may rise to a fuller measure of success:

Saving. If you receive all your wages/income, give 10% in the tithe, keep 10% for personal use, then save 80%. If you receive one-half of your wages/income, give 10% to the Lord, keep 20% for personal use, then save 70%. If you have car payments, these will likely need to come from your savings.

Spending. One proverb says,

"Expenses tend to rise to meet income." Personal discipline calls for purposeful spending. Some young people spend all their money and have no idea where it went. Bringing your consumer spending down to 10% requires record keeping and budgeting, which provides excellent experience for later life.

Credit Cards. Start out without them! Learn first to buy only with cash. That way you can better relate earning to values involved in spending. Of course, no cash—no buy!

Investments. Ask older people about places to invest. Personally, I do not recommend mutual funds at this time. The economy is not strong. Mutual funds seem to be overvalued. Reputable investments now are in the 6% to 7% range. Higher returns can be found in the high risk category.

Expensive sports. Early opportunities for high wages are, at times, a mixed blessing. The more affluent our life style, the more presumptuous we tend to become. Recreation is within the allowance of Bible principles. But expensive sports squander the resources God meant to be used or saved for more noble purposes. Quality of life always rises in tandem with self-discipline.

Voluntary service. Giving one year or more has been a very good thing for numerous young people. The monthly allowance is a small percentage of potential income

available at home. Some young men have actually been able to save some with that allowance, while others have felt a need to borrow money. One area seldom mentioned publicly is the discipline of living within one's income. One's chosen lifestyle becomes a critical issue already in the teenage years. Self-denial is even more basic than self-discipline.

Vehicle cost. One's choice of vehicle is probably the most revealing index of personal values and stewardship. Expensive, popular vehicles have a high depreciating cost which is seldom considered. A recent Hertz car rental depreciation schedule for a new car is as follows: first year=31%; second year=25%; third year=19%; fourth year=7%; fifth year=4%. Amazing, isn't it? Those figures are for wholesale values, no doubt. Buying a vehicle which is four or more years old looks like a wise choice.

Gas mileage is another major stewardship consideration, with gas topping \$3.50, and rising. Next to that is *how often we drive down the road, how far, and why*.

Home life. Here is a personal enrichment opportunity slipping through our fingers. The American idea of leisure is:

1. It must be away from home.
2. It must be where lots of people are.
3. It must cost money.

What ever happened to “Home, Sweet Home” in Mennonite land, USA?

Many of our young people are overdeveloped socially and materially, while being underdeveloped spiritually and academically. Spending three evenings a week at home for family interaction, personal Bible study, and academics of various kinds would be revolutionary, but it is long overdue.

Parents could/should also be involved in a fulfilling experience of home life. Some of our parents try to be home with their youth one night per week. Is that enough? Where parents are unable or unwilling to break the chain of generational going-away-every-night-of-the-week, youth may need to do it on their own initiative.

We want to rise, not sink. We want to be enriched, not impoverished. We want to be expanding, not shriveling up. The teenage years last only a few short years. But those years are tremendously important toward long-term adult development. The habits of youth become the patterns of adulthood.

The Bottom Line is that this brief article is not intended to help our young people become rich materially. And yet, some may become rich through application of these life principles. However, all of us can be rich in faith and enriched in the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. May we eventually hear the words of our Lord Himself, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.”



The Storm Comes—Then What?

Samuel Beachy, Belvidere, TN

The weather is getting stormy and severe winds are raging.

Suddenly a tornado comes into view. What shall we do? Some people have storm shelters for refuge in time of a storm. The best way to gain protection from a storm is to use a storm shelter.

We need to be ready at all times for storms. A storm shelter is not

the place for junk or collectibles. It should be cleaned out before the storm comes. The hinges and the door latch must be in good working order. The vents need to be open as well. It is important that proper maintenance is done on the storm shelter. Yes, if it is to give protection, the storm shelter must be in good condition. If we just sit in the house and watch the storm

come our lives may be in danger. But protection is found by doing what we know is right.

Jesus wants to be a spiritual storm shelter for us. He will give us comfort and strength. Will we trust Jesus as our only hope? Psalm 61:3 says, “For thou hast been a shelter for me, and a strong tower from the enemy.” A shelter gives protection. When the spiritual storms rage about us, we may grow discouraged. When the winds of uncertainty are blowing, we may become confused. Jesus invites us to come to Him.

He wants to adjust our vision. Instead of looking at the wind and rain, He wants us to look up. Looking up beyond the wind and rain and “Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith” (Heb. 12:2a). When we look up, then Jesus looks down and provides shelter for us in the Rock of Ages. This is a sure and solid foundation for the child of God to build upon.

In Scripture, we find words describing the Christian’s protection: the rock, the high tower, the fortress, the shield, and the buckler. The Christian finds protection in them all.

God wants to be our rock. Have you ever stood on a large rock? It is solid and secure. That’s what God provides for us. He provides the Rock of Ages that has stood the test of

time. It will always stand! Ephesians 5:20 refers to Jesus as the chief cornerstone on which the rest of the building is fitly framed. Jesus must be the foundation of our Christian life. He is the only means of salvation, which in the end will give us the protection we need. It will stand in spite of the storm!

God wants to be our high tower. Psalm 144:2a says, “My goodness, and my fortress; my high tower, and my deliverer; my shield, and he in whom I trust;” A high tower demonstrates protection from the enemy. God provides great provisions in fighting the enemy. He gives us the Christian armor. This will protect us from all the fiery darts of the wicked. In Ephesians 6, it tells us to put on the shield of faith, whereby we can “quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.” We need faith to live the Christian life. Why do we fall into sin at times? It is because the shield is not held in its proper place.

God wants to be our fortress. A fortress is a fort, a place built with walls and defenses. This is what our Father wants to be for us. He wants to protect us from the enemy. He wants to be our fortress every day and moment of our life. He will be there for us regardless of our situation. We must let God take over and pick up the broken pieces and put them

together again. The defense which He has available is the Word of God. The Word tells us how to live a victorious Christian life. In Revelation 12:11, it says, "And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death." The blood of Jesus has tremendous power. Satan was defeated by the blood of the Lamb. Now Jesus gives us that power to defeat our enemy. The power of the blood of the Lamb! The enemy is defeated when we claim the blood of Jesus Christ. This is an excellent fortress that we have in Jesus Christ.

We have looked at some of the ways God protects his children. The provisions are available if we accept them. We can experience peace in

time of storm. God cares about us and it is comforting to know that the Son of God is above the storm clouds, looking down upon us.

Picture in your mind a bird in a cleft of a rock. The storm is raging all around it. Lightning flashes, thunder booms, and rain is falling in torrents. In the cleft of the rock the bird is safe. We Christians experience storms in our spiritual life, but we have a cleft in the Rock of our Salvation. That Rock is Jesus Christ. True peace is not controlled by circumstances, but rather by our relationship with God.

Jesus Christ is a shelter to anyone who calls upon His name and accepts Him as Lord and Master. God will be there for us, if we but obey Him and keep His commandments.



The Old Armchair

By Louis Spillman, Waynesboro, VA

The following tribute was written on July 4, 1968, about Mrs. Sadie Schrock, mother of Elmer Schrock, of Stuarts Draft, VA. It first appeared in the Waynesboro News Virginian. Bro. Elmer comments: "It humbles me as I compare my values with those of my mother. It encourages me to know that a quiet, simple and godly person will, in some way, affect other people in a positive manner."

It is customary to write something patriotic today. But something happened this morning that interferes with this customary procedure. It isn't that I shun patriotism. Actually, I'm downright "corny" on the subject but another emotion has reared its head today. Every six weeks I visit the doctor, not to discover if I'm alive but rather to make certain that I continue to live at full potential. Somewhere I may have a tinge of Chinese in my

ancestry. Most assuredly I believe that we should visit doctors to insure that we stay well; not wait until we're miserably sick and then stumble into the doctor's office to get well.

Well, this morning I was in the doctor's reception room waiting my turn. The persistent and unseemly high temperatures of late have somewhat sapped my enthusiasm and vitality. In walked a little woman complete with bonnet, long dress, long sleeves and high collar. She looked as if she had a lot of other clothing on, too. I was without coat, wearing a short-sleeved shirt. Open at the collar and without a necktie. How, I thought, can she possibly stand this terrific heat? She carried a bunch of flowers obviously freshly picked from her garden. She was bringing them to the doctor!

Now I've seen many an unselfish woman take flowers from her garden to someone who is ill; I've seen them share beautiful blossoms with friends and neighbors. However, this is the first time I ever personally encountered a woman taking flowers to her doctor. My interest was, indeed, aroused. I even forgot the heat. This woman's face was peaceful, serene and benign. She explained to the young lady, quietly and kindly, that the doctor enjoyed flowers and since so few men did, she wanted them to be on his desk. Later, when I sat in his office, I discovered the flowers were there. Somehow, having witnessed the whole transaction, they

added immensely to the pleasure of my visit.

How often, during the years, I've sympathized with these heavily-attired Amish women. How uncomfortable they must be, has persisted in my thoughts. But I know now that they are comfortable and have peace, because they have love in their hearts. To share beauty with another was not unusual for this lady. I've visited my doctor hundreds of times but it never occurred to me to take him any flowers. How blind am I! Doctors have seemed self-confident and assured. But this lady was wise enough to discover that her doctor loved flowers and it was as natural as the rising of the sun, for her to bring some to him.

When I go to the doctor it's to get something. When this wonderful woman goes to the doctor she gives something. This is the great decision each of us faces. Are we to live our life with a focus of *getting or giving?* This little lady, without great ostentation, excitement or any effort to attract attention, has found the secret and is living it. None of us can get something without giving. Each of us must lose our life to find it. When the great roll is called "up yonder" this little lady will be right up at the top of the roll call. Fame, wealth, distinction...they are amazingly insignificant compared to a genuine desire to share what we have with others.



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.*

Bontrager-Martin

Bro. Clifford, son of Richard and Ella Bontrager, Topeka, IN, and Sis. Krista, daughter of David and Christina Martin, Rochelle, VA, at Oak Grove Mennonite Church on Feb. 23, 2008, by Tim Miller.

Bontrager-Schlabach

Bro. James Wesley, son of Linford and Kay Bontrager, Goshen, IN, and Sis. Virginia Rose, daughter of Eugene and Rosa Schlabach, Free Union, VA, at Nortonsville Church of God, Dyke, VA, for Faith Mission Fellowship, on March 29, 2008, by Ivan Beachy.

Funk-Miller

Bro Zachary, son of Kevin and Becky Funk, Redfield, IA, and Sis. Crystal, daughter of Omar and Rose Miller, Leon, IA, at Trinity Church for Leon Salem Mennonite Church on April 5, 2008, by Monroe Gingerich.

Kauffman-Mast

Bro. Ervin Ray, son of Leroy and Sheryl Kauffman, Burkesville, KY, and Sis. Martha Fern, daughter of John and Mahala Mast, Crossville, TN, at Dripping Springs Baptist Church for Mt. Moriah Mennonite Church on April 5, 2008, by John Mast.

King-Beachy

Bro. Eldon, son of Eli B. and Mary Jane King, Belleville, PA, and Sis. Monica, daughter of Simon and Loretta Beachy, Olathe, CO, at First Baptist Church, Delta, CO, for Sunny View Mennonite Church, on March 15, 2008, by Eli B. King, Jr.

Stoll-Stoltzfus

Bro. Franklin, son of Robert and Rose Stoll, Donalds, SC, and Sis. Shanna Yvonne, daughter of Jerry and Dianne Stoltzfus, Honea Path, SC, at Due West A.R.P. Church on April 19, 2008, by Billy Stoll.

Stoltzfus-Stoll

Bro. Marvin Jay, son of Lee and Barbara Stoltzfus, Gap, PA, and Sis. Julie René, daughter of Dennis and Marge Stoll, Abbeville, SC, at Cold Spring Mennonite Church, on April 5, 2008, by Lee Stoltzfus.

Yoder-Beachy

Bro. Keith Lamar, son of Marvin and Fannie Yoder, Abbeville, SC, and Sis. Hannah Elaine, daughter of Paul and Erma Beachy, Millersburg, OH, at Maranatha Fellowship, on March 29, 2008, by Ernest Hochstetler.

Yoder-Cross

Bro. David Lee, son of Irvin and Beulah Yoder, Montezuma, GA, and Sis. Heidi, daughter of Verlin and Naomi Cross, Millwood, KY, and Church of Joy for Cedar Springs A.M. Church, on March 14, 2008, by Jim Yoder.

cradle roll

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

Barbar, Clement and Carol (Goldsmith), Fairfield East, Sydney, Australia, twelfth child, fifth son, Stephen Luke, Feb. 3, 2008.

Beachy, Ervin and Elizabeth (Zook), Lewisburg, PA, first child and dau., Abigail Elizabeth, March 24, 2008.

Beiler, Conrad and Lydia (Stoltzfus), Cross Hill, SC, first child and son, Joshua Kent, April 15, 2008.

Hostetler, Amos and Emma (Byler), Watsontown, PA, thirteenth child, tenth dau., Anita Marie, Feb. 24, 2008.

Hostetler, Dan and Kris (Gingerich), Belleville, PA, second child and dau., Kara Jo, March 29, 2008.

Hostetler, Jesse and Mary Ann (Yoder), Belleville, PA, second child and dau., Kayla Diane, Feb. 19, 2008.

Kanagy, Titus and Beulah (Peachey), Wytheville, VA, fourth child, second dau., Elizabeth Anne, May 2, 2008.

Kauffman, Larry Jay and Bethann Joy (Wadel), Ronks, PA, first child and son, Jevon Jayson, March 28, 2008.

Kurtz, Arlan and Linda (Peight), Belleville, PA, fifth child, third dau.,

Belleville, PA, Natalie Rose, April 1, 2008.

Lapp, Daniel and Connie (Yoder), Holtwood, PA, second child, first dau., Makayla Renae, April 8, 2008.

Lehman, Spencer and Trudy (Dick), Cocolamus, PA, first child and dau., Victoria Cheyenne, Feb. 26, 2008.

Miller, Glenn and Ruth (Lapp), Bird-in-Hand, PA, third child, second dau., Katrina Ruth, April 3, 2008.

Miller, Keith and Miriam (Martin), Hutchinson, KS, fourth child, third son, Trevor Scott, April 25, 2008.

Miller, Ivan and Nora (Hershberger), Winchester, OH, fifth child, third son, Josiah Anthony, March 24, 2008.

Miller, Josias and Sharon (Miller), Baltic, OH, first child and son, Lance David, Feb. 29, 2008.

Miller, Melvin and Connie (Miller), Shipshewana, IN, sixth child, (one dau. deceased), fourth son, Julian Blythe, April 10, 2008.

Miller, Steve and Karen (Miller), Harrison, AR, third child and son, Chase Andrew, Feb. 10, 2008.

Mullet, Jeffrey and Denise (Swartzentruber), Newcomerstown, OH, second child, first dau., Emily Renae, March 30, 2008.

Otto, Wilber and Beth (Plank),

Sullivan, IL, first child and dau., Kimberly Grace, March 16, 2008.

Overholt, Albert and Judy (Deim), Abbeville, SC, fourth child, third dau., Audrey Renae, March 31, 2008.

Overholt, David and Charlotte (Yoder), Montezuma, GA, first child and son, Peyton Wade, April 2, 2008.

Peachey, Nathaniel and Pauline (Zook), Belleville, PA, second child and son, Malachi David, March 7, 2008.

Plank, John and Jolene (Weaver), Montezuma, GA, second child and dau., Autumn Jewel, March 16, 2008.

Schmucker, Levi and Angelene (Bontrager), Arlington, KS, first child and dau., Alice Carol, March 28, 2008.

Stoltzfoos, Dwight and Brenda (Petersheim), Gap, PA, second child, first dau., Jewel Dawn, April 4, 2008.

Stoltzfus, Mervin and Nancy (King), Honey Brook, PA, ninth child, fourth dau., Judith Eileen, March 1, 2008.

Stutzman, Galen and Rhonda (Gingerich), Free Union, VA, fourth child, second son, Cody Grant, March 7, 2008.

Troyer, Larry and Susie (Yoder), Russellville, OH, sixth child, fifth son, Mathias Ryan, April 12, 2008.

Vaughan, Thomas and Michelle (Cressell), Sardinia, OH, third child, second son, Samuel Alexander, Feb. 23, 2008.

Weaver, Jason and Juanita (Mullet), Freeport, OH, fifth child, third son, Quentin Juan, April 14, 2008.

Yoder, Allen and Debbie (Mullet), Berlin, OH, sixth child, fifth dau., Annie Danelle, April 2, 2008.

Yoder, Emanuel and Glenda (Yoder), Danville, AL, second child, first dau., Natasha Rose, April 5, 2008.

Yoder, Merle and Karen (Glick), New Holland, PA, first child and dau., Maria Grace, April 25, 2008.

Yoder, Stanley and Jovonn (Weaver), Montezuma, GA, third child, second dau., Vanita Joyce, Jan. 15, 2008.

Yutzy, Merlin and Mary Lou (Glick), Ronks, PA, third child and dau., Anna Justine, April 29, 2008.

Zook, Dwayne and Heidi (Gingerich), Beavertown, PA, second child, first son, Jedadiah Dwayne, March 23, 2008.

Zook, Jesse and Laura (Peachey), Mifflin, PA, eighth child, third dau., Melody Joy, March 22, 2008.

Zook, Kenneth and Melissa (Beachy), Port Royal, PA, first child and son, Kade Jeremiah, March 11, 2008.

obituaries

Correction: In the obituaries of the April issue, I incorrectly reported the marriage date of Harry and Lizzie Ann (Schrock) Yoder. I am sorry! The correct date was December 13, 1951. A twelve-year-old couple getting married? What a difference one wrong key stroke makes!

-PLM 

observations

We know that the first amendment to the American Constitution declares, "Congress shall make no law respecting the establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." Earlier this was understood to mean that government was to be neutral, but also willing to accommodate things that were religious in the public arena. In recent decades, a very strong anti-religious influence has pervaded government at every level. This involves local public schools and other entities all the way to the state and national courts. The Ten Commandments controversy was not a problem until recent decades.

Author/Pastor Buster Soarees reports that he is often asked to speak in public schools. This pastor seems to communicate well with young people. This includes a large number of teenagers who face problems like pregnancy and potential suicide. Typically, a principal will willingly disclose such problems, but add this note: "Of course, since this is a public

school, you dare not mention God."

Soarees responds by saying he respects separation of church and state. He has read the Constitution which mentions our Creator. The present flag salute mentions God. The word God is printed on our currency. He typically tells the principal in effect, that with God in the Constitution, in the pledge, and on his money, he cannot cooperate in trying to keep God out of our schools.

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This is being written on April 15. Wheat fields in Kansas are lush and green. Wheat harvest is approximately two months away. World food grain inventories are extremely low. This includes rice, wheat and corn. In third world countries corn is regarded a food grain, whereas we generally consider it feed for livestock. Corn is as important to them as meat, eggs and dairy products are to us.

The low grain supplies are traceable to several factors. In our part of the wheat belt, there was a near crop failure in 2007, due to an unusually late freeze. Australia also had a very

short crop. Ethanol production is a contributing factor to reduced corn inventories. This combination has created the very unusual situation in grain markets.

While grain farmers welcome the prospect of a bountiful harvest and a good income, there is another side to this story. High prices and food shortages are causing serious riots in widely scattered third-world countries. This includes Haiti, Egypt, and Bangladesh. World Bank president said that surging costs could mean seven lost years in overcoming world hunger. He also said that while "many are worrying about filling the gas tanks, many others around the world are struggling to fill their stomachs, and it is getting more difficult every day." (Gleaned from several sources, including CNN News.)

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An interesting item relative to global warming concerns is that polar ice levels that had been shrinking at alarming rates, from 5 million to 1.5 million square miles, has in this winter (2007-08) recovered to nearly its former size. This has been caused by an unusually frigid winter in several parts of the Northern Hemisphere. (*World magazine*, 3-18-08).

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To write for publication requires a certain level of mental exercise. I would like to think that writing might be of some help in slowing down

the process of becoming mentally dormant. We realize, however, that such things are ultimately in the hands of our sovereign Creator.

It was a real day brightener when I recently came across a letter I had received in June, 2005. The following is excerpted from that letter:

"I can recommend *Calvary Messenger* as an inspirational magazine that teaches truth and encourages further study of the Word of God to all age groups, including my 94-year-old age group." The writer closes by wishing God's blessing as we continue this ministry. Adin Kauffman, New Philadelphia, Ohio, who wrote the letter, is still living. I wonder how he is doing at age 97. This acknowledgement is a belated thank you for an encouraging note. It would be interesting to know how many others in their 90's are regular readers of CM.

What would be even more encouraging would be to learn that large numbers of young people are taking serious interest in what our Youth Editor, Ernest Eby, and some of their peers are offering in the Youth section. Some of the subjects would be suitable for group study and discussion.

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James E. Woodward, 55, has spent 27 years in prison for a murder committed in 1980. Recently, he has become the 18th person in the Dallas

County area to be cleared of criminal conviction through DNA testing a total of 31 people have been exonerated in Texas. (From *Tell Me* news)

This is a sober reminder that our

judicial system is subject to human error. There are no statistics to tell us how many persons have been imprisoned or executed for crimes they did not commit. -DLM 

Ministers' Meeting Messages—2008

This is a condensation of a message preached at the annual ministers' meetings, March 25-27, 2008, at Arthur, IL, at Otto Center. The complete set of eight tapes or nine CD's is available from SON Recordings, 10100 Piper Lane, Bristow, VA, 20136 for \$45, postpaid.

1. The Mighty Power of God

Perry Troyer, Plain City, OH

When we think of the mighty power of God we find ourselves rather weak. But sometimes God uses the weak things to expound His power. This subject, which speaks of divine strength, is taken from Ephesians 6:10, "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might."

We note that Jesus showed God's mighty power when He was on earth as a man. He fed thousands of people with five loaves and two fish. Or we could spend all evening noting the marvels of creation. But the Apostle Paul has a message that goes beyond that. It is the power of God manifested in man. This is

not a power to boast about. In fact, it humbles us under the mighty hand of God. It is a power of God and not of man. It is not measured by horsepower or manpower. We present ourselves to God to have His power flow through us.

We note that verse 10 begins Paul's summary statement of his epistle to the Ephesians. He seems to say, "In conclusion, I have yet something important to tell you. I want to close this letter with, 'Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might.'" There is a reason that God inspired Paul to write this section, verses 10 to 20. We are in a spiritual warfare. Life is a battle. We are at war with the adversary, the enemy of our souls. God knew we need divine strength to overcome the chief enemy. We need the power of God to win the battle.

There are two kingdoms: the Kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan. The kingdom of Satan is at war with the Kingdom of God. Maybe we should say it this way: It is God's battle and we are His foot soldiers. We might say that God is going to win the battle. No, He has already

won the battle at the resurrection of Jesus Christ. It seems to me that we as ordained men are in the front lines of the present battle.

As we take an overview of this epistle, we see the plan of salvation explained. Obedience and unity are two main arteries running through the Bible from Genesis to Revelation. We see something coming together here. It is difficult for God to bestow His power where obedience and unity do not prevail. God has always placed a high value on obedience. This started with the first two people in the Garden of Eden. There He set a pattern for blessing in obedience that He has followed since then.

How does this relate to the power of God on our lives? I believe God's power is available as we obey His Word. In Joshua 1:5-9, we see a direct connection between the power of God (and the blessing of God) with obedience to God. We understand that Joshua was to obey the word God had given to Moses, only then would the promise and the blessing follow. After obedience--the promise! After obedience—the power of God!

Throughout the Old Testament, we see that where obedience and unity prevailed, God's power was manifest. Battles were won. When disobedience and disunity prevailed, God's power was withheld. Battles were lost to the enemy.

Let me share my heart the best I

know how with regard to a few areas relative to this topic. Sometimes when we preach, we believe God has put a message in our hearts. When we get there, we hardly know how to proceed. This is one of those times for me. I speak of experiencing the power of God in our churches in direct relation to obedience and unity among us.

I think these two main arteries (obedience and unity) have been ruptured in our churches. In some areas we have not done very well. We are praying for God's power upon us. We need to meet the conditions so that God can bestow that power upon us and we can go forward in the battle for truth. There is strength in unity. "United we stand. Divided we fall."

I realize that people can be difficult to work with. Some of us are just a little hard to get along with and yet the Bible requires unity and obedience so God can bless us with His power. This power allows us to live in victory.

We mentioned that ministers, bishops and deacons serve in the front battle lines. It behooves this body to walk in obedience, earnestly seeking unity among us so the power of God can be released in our lives and our churches. There is so much at stake.

Let us make an analogy: If in the U.S. Army, the soldiers would turn their artillery on each other, it would give the enemy all the advantage it needs to win the battle. This is

especially so, if the soldiers in the front line turn their artillery toward each other. I believe these meetings are going to help us take a fresh look at the call of God upon our lives and build for the Kingdom's sake.

Let's not waste the prayer of the Lord Jesus recorded in John 17:21, "That they all may be one, as thou Father art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us, that the world may believe that thou hast sent me." I believe there was something in the heart of Jesus as He prayed to the Heavenly Father for us that we would be one in Him. We are one together in Him that the world may see. "And the glory thou hast given me, I have given them." Let's not waste that prayer, brethren!

Let me construct a story: The tiger was in his cage. He was fenced in. Three boys came along and two of them started to tease the tiger. The tiger went into a rage and jumped the fence. The tiger was on the loose. He devoured the one boy and badly injured the second boy. Meanwhile, the third boy turned and ran from the tiger to safety. The first boy was Samson, who teased the tiger and was devoured. The second boy was David, who teased the tiger and was badly injured, but later turned to Almighty God with true repentance and was healed. The third boy was Joseph. He did not tease the tiger and when he saw the tiger on the loose he

turned and ran to safety. What does this story mean to us?

We have a lot more than three boys at stake. If the tiger has not already jumped the fence, it is making a serious attempt to do so. He's angry. He's growling. He's growling angrily. Let us make a few applications from this story: I see technology and sports as several of today's tigers. Can we keep them fenced in? I fear that we have been teasing the tigers.

The cell phone and the internet evolution, just to name a few, along with the craving for sports, are "tigers." While I don't understand all that can be done with the cell phone, except for phone service, I understand that you can get television and internet access on some cell phones. When the cell phone came out, we accepted it as a useful invention. (It still is.) But with texting ability (for good or evil), new possibilities exist. If we don't keep a tight rein on the cell phone, the internet, and sports, they will become tigers on the loose. But we're going to band together, aren't we?

These meetings are going to help us in dealing with some of these dangers, which I believe are holding back the power of God from us and our churches. Let us take another look at the dangers.

1 Peter 5:8 says, "Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." What

did God have in mind when He inspired Peter to write this message? God knew what we would face today. Of course, we don't need cell phones and internet to be in danger of the roaring beast, but their misuse will surely contribute to the danger. Their misuse teases the tiger!

What protection are we willing to provide? Let me relate a true story, given to me in recent times. A little boy went to his dad's office window, planning to tap on the window to playfully scare his dad. Before he did so, he saw (through the window) pornography on the computer. Surely it was just a pop-up! Surely it wasn't a planned incident! But no, it stayed. He turned and ran to his mother and told her what he saw. She went to the office door and found it locked. When the door was finally unlocked, the computer screen was cleared. Where shall they go with this one? They can't go to the pastor, because he is the pastor.

I realize that this may be a rare case. But it is still sad. Remember that we have a lot more than three boys at stake. How does this relate to our topic? Paul gave us this teaching in Ephesians 6, so we know how to get power and strength to overcome the enemy of our soul. We must cooperate with God to get this power. We must put on the **whole** armor of God.

Are these ideas too elementary for us? A billboard advertisement

advertises rat poison. In the ad, a rat is saying, "We like it, but it kills us." Some of these things we like, but they kill us. Some say, let us accept the internet with a tight rein requiring protection, with only safe providers and an accountability program. Some say, let us just trust each other and leave it open ended. Yet others say, we simply cannot afford to open that door; we cannot go down that road. So we wind up with, "Let each one be fully persuaded in his own mind." Could we at least take a fresh look at these issues?

Power to overcome the enemy is our message and our goal. Whatever we conclude to be the contributing factors, we seem to be losing strength in our churches. I'm not scolding you; I'm with you. I'm just laying out my heart. Could these meetings contribute something to reverse the troublesome trends that weaken the structure?

We take Paul's letter to the Ephesians to be for us today. Let us unite with true obedience and humility, bow before almighty God and each other, and win the battle together.

Having said all this, the internet is probably here to stay, some would say. With the growth of internet technology, and its increasing importance to the business world, we must keep in mind what it means to achieve sufficient protection from its evils. Absolute protection must be the goal. I believe that

perhaps the most sweeping, long-term changes wrought by the internet in the business arena, are not in the best interests of the kingdom of God and the church, present or future.

In Matthew 5:29 and 30, "And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell..." If the matters we have discussed cause us to stumble and fall, I believe the Lord Jesus is saying, "**Put it away.**" If you are a married man, you owe your wife a full display of your life. This includes computer use and your whereabouts. I have not said that you must go and dispose of your computer and your internet access, but I will go this far: If you cannot control the internet, or if it keeps you from living in victory, you have no honorable choice but to

get rid of it.

I believe we must do something specifically to protect us. I have a cell phone. When I flip it, my wife's picture comes on the screen. That might also be a good idea for your computer screen. It gives us a sense of protection and where we belong.

Spiritual strength is a divine empowerment and is the only source that will enable us to win the battle against Satan. It is the same power that enabled the children of Israel to escape Egypt and then trapped the enemy. It is the same power that rolled away the stone from the door of the sepulcher. It raised Christ Jesus from the dead. This is the only power that will defeat the enemy. There is power in the blood! But it must be applied. Let us not waste the power provided by the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ!



Pastor Joe Wright's Prayer

Selected by the editor

Twelve years ago, on January 23, 1996, Wichita Pastor Joe Wright, [not to be confused with former pastor Jeremiah Wright from Chicago, of recent notoriety] was asked to go to our capital at Topeka, Kansas, to offer the opening prayer at the opening of a new session of the Kansas Senate. He wrote a prayer and read it. This prayer caused much rejoicing, but also some

consternation. In the months that followed, his church received over 6,500 pieces of mail in response, with only 47 of them negative (less than 1%). Then they stopped counting.

Here is Pastor Wright's prayer:

"Heavenly Father, we come before you to ask your forgiveness. We seek your direction and your guidance. We know your Word says, 'Woe to

those who call evil good,’ but that’s what we’ve done.

“We have lost our spiritual equilibrium. We have inverted our values. We have ridiculed the absolute truth of Your Word in the name of pluralism. We have worshiped other gods and called it multiculturalism.

“We have endorsed perversion and called it an alternative lifestyle.

“We have exploited the poor and called it a lottery. We have neglected the needy and called it self-preservation. We have rewarded laziness and called it welfare. In the name of choice, we have killed our unborn. In the name of right to life, we have killed abortionists.

“We have neglected to discipline our children and called it building self-esteem. We have abused power and called it political savvy. We have coveted our neighbor’s possessions and called it taxes. We have polluted the air with profanity and pornography and called it freedom of expression. We have ridiculed the time-honored values of our forefathers and called it enlightenment.

“Search us, O God, and know our hearts today. Try us. Show us any

wickedness within us. Cleanse us from every sin and set us free. Guide and bless these men and women who have been sent here by the people of the State of Kansas, and have been ordained by You to govern this great state.

“Grant them the wisdom to rule. May their decisions direct us to the center of your will. And, as we continue our prayer and as we come in out of the fog, give us clear minds to accomplish our goals as we begin this Legislature. For we pray in Jesus’ name; Amen.”

It is not surprising that a legislator walked out during the prayer.

Since that time many requests have come for a copy of that prayer, some from other countries, including India, Africa and Korea.

Pastor Wright was quick to give credit to Bob Russell from Kentucky who had earlier offered a similar prayer at a Governor’s Prayer Breakfast at Frankfort, KY. Pastor Wright did not realize the ruckus his prayer had caused until later. When he was told about it, he said, “I certainly did not mean to be offensive to individuals, but I don’t apologize for the truth.” 

*Carry your faith in the Lord as a song in your heart,
not a burden on your back.*

My Spiritual Journey

Aaron Stoltzfus, age 14

Aaron, son of Michael and Linda Stoltzfus, was baptized the same day his parents were. This is part of what Aaron shared at his baptism on March 9, 2008, with his brothers and sisters at Weavertown A.M. Church.]

I want to share my testimony about what the Lord has done in my life. He has worked miracles in my life. I always had this fear of death, and wondered, "If I were to die, where would I go?" I usually tried quickly to think of something else.

Once I heard a sermon about hell and that really made me think. I knew where I would go if I died. I thought I had better obey my parents, and the Bible, so I wouldn't go there. So I tried to obey, but didn't make any progress, since I wasn't relying on God. This made me angry at myself, and I started to become discouraged and depressed.

Not long after that, we attended some revival meetings which were being held every evening for a week. Each evening at the altar call, I thought I would go up the next evening, but it didn't happen. One evening I thought for sure I would go forward. I had even taken the chewing gum out of my mouth! But I didn't go up.

The Spirit kept convicting me of

my need for a Savior. One night, I just couldn't sleep. I just lay there and thought about my need for a Savior.

After a while, though, I went to sleep, and soon I had this dream: A row of us boys were sitting on a bench. A man took us, one at a time, into a separate room. I didn't want to go with him because I didn't want to answer his questions. Well, after a while, I went in and He asked me, "Are you born again?" I didn't want to answer that question, but I knew the answer was, "No." That struck me to the heart, and I woke up sweating.

That dream woke me up to the stark reality of where I was going and I did not want to go there. Then I realized how sin-stained I looked beside Christ and the tears started coming. But still, I looked at the things I would have to give up. Finally, I went downstairs to my parents and then the tears really came. We knelt together and prayed to God to forgive all the sins I had done in the past and invited him to enter my heart. I also told Him that I would go wherever He wants me to go, and do whatever He wants me to do. After that, I had a wonderful peace and I felt as if nothing could ever take it away from me and that I would never be unhappy again!

After my conversion, when I read the Bible, it all just made a lot more sense! I learned also that while God helped me overcome a lot of things, there are still temptations that I face daily. Another thing I noticed is that I can look my parents in the eye. Before that, I didn't want to be around them, but that all changed. Also I noticed that when I mess up, I didn't just think I was stupid or let it get me discouraged. I just confess it and ask the Lord to help me do better.

I also feel a lot of love from God. Before, I thought that I had better do what He wants, or I'd get punished. Now I realize that I will sometimes mess up, no matter how hard I try, but God will forgive me, if I ask for it, and will help me have victory over sin. I now want to have a believer's baptism to symbolize that I have accepted Christ and publicly declare that I want to follow Him.

In Psalm 40:2 and 3, I find words

to describe my journey: "He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the Lord."

I also want to thank you as a congregation for your support and prayers. Please keep praying for me as I continue in my walk with the Lord. I also thank the ministers for encouraging and teaching me in the way of the Lord.

[Submitted by Aaron Lapp, Kinzers, PA, who reports that many local families were present for this deeply moving baptismal service. In the same service, Aaron Stoltzfus' parents, Michael and Linda, also gave testimony about their journey of faith. Their testimony took about 40 minutes. It sounds like it was a heavenly experience when time seems to stand still! -PLM]



Building on a Solid Foundation

Lowell Miller, Nickerson, KS

This is a condensation of the keynote address given at Hutchinson, KS, at the area-wide Christian education meeting on January 19, 2008.

Our school boards face many responsibilities. There are teachers to hire, curriculum to approve, and facilities to prepare. Principals, teachers, and home educators spend

tremendous amounts of energy planning and executing lesson plans. Days are filled with the bustle of the present. The vision for this topic is to step back from the urgent daily obligations common to school life and to take a fresh look at the *core foundations* essential to *developing godly men and women in our*

churches and communities.

I have worked in construction for a number of years. In general construction it is very important to have a good foundation under a building. During the five years we spent in Nicaragua, we experienced several earthquakes. In La Ceibita, the home of one pastor was destroyed. The house was reduced to a pile of rubble. In that pile of rubble lay the body of his small grandson, who had been killed when the house collapsed on him. The child's mother was injured. In that family there was much grief and sadness. Many other houses in the area were damaged, but not all were destroyed. The pastor's house could have been built to withstand an earthquake of that magnitude, but it wasn't built well enough. Nicaragua is in an earthquake zone. Devastating earthquakes are fairly common. *With proper precautions, well-built buildings can withstand nearly any earthquake.*

I see parallels in the education of our children. We have structure in place. We are doing education. We spend much time and energy in the mechanics of education, sometimes at the expense of spending enough time on the *underlying foundation of education*. Buildings without good foundations may stand for some time in ideal situations. Yet adversity exposes fatal flaws. Similarly, disasters in education may come because of

poor foundations.

Jesus stressed the importance of a good foundation in Matthew 7:24-27. In 1 Corinthians 3, the Apostle Paul has a discourse about buildings. In verses 9-11, he says, "For we are laborers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building. According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise master builder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. **For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.**" Menno Simons adopted that final truth as his life verse.

If we are to have a proper view of the world, it is imperative that our lives are founded on the firm foundation of Jesus Christ:

Raising children is a sacred trust. God has chosen to populate the planet through procreation. Children are born to parents. Parents become grandparents. Grandparents die. New children are born. The cycle goes on and on. Many of you here today are parents. Depending on your stage in life, you may remember the newly-arrived, purple-faced baby crying loudly soon after entering the world. If you are older, you may have the mental picture of that same son or daughter leaving home to make a life of his or her own. Today I am concentrating on that period of life

between those two scenes.

Man launches satellites into orbit and they keep going on and on. That is not God's plan for children. Completely dependent as newborn babies, they absorb very much from their parents. Not only do they develop personality and manners, they begin to form life values. Much of that is an unconscious process which happens as they observe others around them. Parents, teachers, and peers all play an important part in that process. Raising children is kind of "a one-shot deal." Sometimes we wish we could have had a practice run. The future of our churches, communities, and culture hangs largely on the values we instill in our children. More importantly, the eternal well-being of our children hinges on their response to God's call on their lives. There are many values competing for our children's attention. We need to be *intentional* about what we pass on. If we proceed without a plan, our children will still pick up values by default. In general, the one in charge of the default function is not our friend.

We want living, passionate, disciples of Christ. We want children who see the world through Christ's eyes of compassion. We want children to know and understand servanthood and humility. We want children who have a clear understanding of the two-kingdom concept and to

which Kingdom their allegiance belongs. We want children to see both the spiritual and physical needs around them. We want them to see beyond Reno County, and even the United States—to the larger world. We want children and youth who see beyond these passing temporal things to eternal realities: children who realize that a man's life does not consist in the abundance of things which he possesses, children who live wholesome lives above the swirling clouds of fashion's passing whims, children who can clearly articulate their faith in the face of a declining moral climate. We want to instill in them a biblical world view. We want to be active participants in the developing of our children's character. As parents, teachers, and leaders, the raising of children is a sacred trust.

Worldview: *Our world view is the basic moral framework through which we view the world. Everything we see is viewed through that perspective. Different colored lenses in glasses make everything take on the lens's color. Our history, our families, and our nationality all help to form our world view. But as Christians, the overarching component of our world view hinges on our faith and our understanding of Christ's Kingdom.*

We are all impacted by the culture around us. In many ways we are affected by the predominant world

views. I think it is good to look at the world views around us. They may be impacting us more than we realize. Let's look at them and see how they may be affecting us and our education.

Popular Secular World Views

Humanism: I see humanism as a system of thought that begins and ends in man. Man is basically the master of his own destiny. In man lie the answers to man's problems. The humanist doesn't want to acknowledge God, for that would displace his own feeling of importance. Humanism can come in degrees.

Intellectualism: Intellectualism is closely related to humanism. Much of modern education dismisses the possibility of a higher power. Man is definitely on the throne. Man's intellect is the answer. Simple things of the Christian faith may seem too elementary for the intellectual to believe. "What does a poor Jewish teacher of 2,000 years ago have to do with my life today? We have sent a man to the moon. We have split the atom. Who knows what we will be doing next?"

The intellectual tries to reason God out of the picture. It frees him to indulge in any fleshly pleasure he chooses. My impression of our secular universities is that the prevailing culture is not neutral, but is working against the Lord of the

universe. A constant exposure to these values tends to erode the life of a Christian. It is important that a young person considering this type of education is very well grounded with a good support group around him before he enters the domain of "the intellectuals." Paul addressed the issue of intellectualism in 1 Corinthians 1:18: "For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved, it is the power of God." [The following verses, 19-28, carry further the cogent message of God's wisdom versus the world's wisdom.]

In Romans 1, we see the sad progression of men who do not retain God in their lives. Verse 20, "For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and godhead; so that they are without excuse." Paul closes that section with these final thoughts in verse 25, "Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshiped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen."

Cynicism. Many people adopt a cynical world view. Traditional values are questioned. Old ways are suspect. The media tends to be made up of these types of people. There is reporting that caters to the intellectuals and the humanists. They may scoff at God. The cynic

may ridicule the only hope for man's salvation. The cynic may call the liberal politicians "moderates" and disdain conservatives as "fundamentalists."

The cynic sees the foolishness of the gullible. He despairs the simplicity of the naïve. He may explain in great detail why an idea or concept is no good and is not worth trying. It is hard for the cynic to see good in anything. Even the things that seem good on the surface probably have some underlying problem that "undoes" the perceived good. Living with a cynic can be emotionally draining.

Hedonism. In Acts 17, we encounter the people of Athens. Paul found a city steeped in idolatry. It seemed that they were a people given over to ungodly philosophy and cynicism. In verse 18 two groups are mentioned: the Epicureans and the Stoics. Most of us have some idea what a stoic is. There are stoics among us. Many of the pioneers had a stoical outlook on life. Whatever came, came. Life wasn't so much something to try to analyze

and figure out as it was something to endure without complaining. The Epicureans, by contrast, seemed to live for pleasure.

Today many have a similar world view. Hedonism: *The doctrine that pleasure is the highest good; the belief or practice of living only for pleasure.* Many people today seek pleasure or good feelings for their own sake. Incredible amounts of money are spent in rather frivolous pursuits. This leads to all kinds of excesses. The day job may not hold much fulfillment if it is only to be endured until the weekend or until that glorious retirement. Drugs. Alcohol. Sensuality. Self-serving pleasure that, ironically, often becomes self-destructive, and "striving after wind." Marilyn Monroe and Elvis Presley were two of the most popular icons of 40-50 years ago. Both came to a tragic end. The passing pleasures the hedonist pursues often leave him feeling unfulfilled. Life becomes a cycle of broken dreams.

To be continued....



mission awareness

Hindrances to Family Worship

Floyd Stoltzfus, New Holland, PA

As Christian families, God has called us to bear witness of our Lord Jesus to a dark world. Someone has commented: "They who daily pray in their homes

do well; they not only pray, but read the Bible do better; but they do the best of all, who not only pray and read the Bible, but also sing the praises of God. The influence of family worship

strikes deep in the human heart and spreads its branches wide.” Worship is the fuel that feeds the heavenly fire of the Holy Spirit in our lives for Christian mission and service.

As David undertook to re-establish national worship in Israel he faced serious hindrances. One was the fact that Israel took along the sacred Ark of the Covenant into battle when they withstood the Philistines who had invaded the land. Israel’s soldiers were confronted with “a very great slaughter” (1 Samuel 4:10). The ark was captured by the enemy. Eli’s two sons were slain. Eli also died after hearing the sad news. Eli’s daughter-in-law gave birth to a son and named him Ichabod, meaning: “Where is the glory?” (“The glory is departed from Israel: because the ark of God was taken”) (1 Samuel 4:21). The Philistines then returned the ark and it was placed about eleven miles southwest of Jerusalem in the house of Abinadab.

The Ark remained outside its designated spot for nearly fifty years. After David was anointed king over all Israel, he made arrangements to bring the Ark of the Covenant home and to establish national worship in the new capital city, Jerusalem. Thousands of people including priests, Levites, and chosen soldiers were in the great procession. The ark was carried on a new cart driven by the

two sons of Abinadab, Uzzah and Ahio. The oxen stumbled. Perhaps the sacred emblem nearly fell off the cart. “Uzzah put forth his hand to the ark of God, and took hold of it” (2 Samuel 6:6b). Uzzah died then and there. Can you imagine the horrified, panic-stricken crowd, as this dreadful news spread through the ranks? The Ark was then taken to the house of Obed-edom, where it was kept for three months. When God’s divine favor was apparent in blessing Obed-edom’s household, David was comforted. Only then did David continue to take steps to restore the Ark to its proper place in the Tabernacle.

Perhaps they read in The Law that they were to place staves through the rings of the Ark. It was to be carried on the shoulders of the priests. (See Exodus 25:13 and 14 and Numbers 7:9.) The Ark had been taken on a “new cart,” an idea that was probably imported from worldly-minded Philistines. They had been given specific instructions to cover the sanctuary and all the holy vessels. “They shall not touch any holy thing, lest they die” (Numbers 4:15), were God’s instructions to them.

What a time of rejoicing when the Ark was finally brought home!

Lessons for Family Worship

1). Disunity in the home. This was

a great day in David's life. While he was not a good role model in some aspects of his life, David offered burnt offerings and peace offerings. Then he blessed the people in the name of the Lord of hosts, and distributed to them bread, wine, and raisins. "And David returned to bless his household" (2 Samuel 6:20). What a lesson for every father, no matter how busy we are, to take time to gather the family together for regular worship. Disunity between husband and wife is like cancer. Unless drastic measures are soon taken to arrest this dreadful "disease," it will spread and kill. The sarcastic speech of Michal, David's wife, clouded the bright day of national and family worship. One writer states, "Possibly she was jealous of David's independence of her and of her father's house—hence the venom in her speech to the man she had loved and whose life she had once saved." Are not scorning and sarcasm evidences of bitterness and jealousy? Paul instructs us to "put off the old man and put on the new man" created in Christ Jesus unto righteousness and true holiness.

2). Sin in the camp. This seems to have been the main cause of Israel's defeat by the Philistines. When Eli's sons made themselves vile, he did not restrain them. If there is disobedience and disorder in the home, here

is the remedy: Repent, restrain and reconcile so that family worship can bring a taste of heaven.

3). Misplaced trust. Israel's safety was not in the Ark of the Lord, but in the Lord of the Ark. Israel had forsaken the Lord and trusted in an object for victory rather than in the Great Architect, who gave them the instructions as to how to make the object. David had learned to ask God for direction to fight against the enemy and to place his trust in Him rather than in his own strategy, skill, and power. If there are objects, gadgets, or electronics in our home that hinder sincere worship of our precious, lovely Lord Jesus, it is better to remove or restrict them rather than to have them rob us of our time with God.

4). Disobedience to God's instructions. The story of Uzzah is recorded to show us the severity of God's judgment when we disregard the specifics of His holy commands. One man's fatal sin hindered and postponed the joyful establishment of worship for a whole nation. Children must be taught early in life to sit still and listen during family worship. Thus they can develop a healthy, reverent fear of God and willingly obey his Word.

Christian families should guard highly the sacredness of this priceless practice!



The Man in White – Part Two

Roseanne Peachey, Oakland, MD

*M*ohammed was named for his father's hero. Mohammed's growing up years had been spent learning about Allah, the god of his father. Mohammed experienced unrest. His recent dreams had only caused more questions. His heart longed to serve the true God. This story is based on an actual account and depicts the way some Muslims are finding Christ today.

Mohammed could not go back to sleep. His heart was filled with a wonderful hope and peace as he replayed the scene of The Man in White appearing to him in a second dream. "Why," he asked, "did he rescue me?"

All was still outside except for the occasional rustling of cattle passing by their hut and his father's deep breathing. Mohammed softly arose from his cot and crept outside. The moon shone brightly on rolling plains of grassland. Was the man in the white robe Allah or was he perhaps the prophet Mohammed? He wondered. But in his innermost soul, he was quite sure it was not the prophet his people worshipped.

The next morning Mohammed told his father about the mysterious second dream.

"We shall go immediately to the witch doctor," Father said.

"But Baba, what about the Man in White? He only defended me from evil. He said he would take care of me if I trusted in him."

His father looked both angry and amused. "Son, this is a mere dream. Forget it! The spirits are trying to steal your mind since you are intelligent and strong."

After the native doctor examined Mohammed he turned to Father and said, "It is a good thing you brought your son to me. He is under a spell and in two days he would have died." He gathered a few kola nuts and instructed Mohammed's father in their use. "Rub these nuts on his forehead at bedtime. It will ward off every evil spirit and they will never return again."

But no witch doctor's ancient rituals could keep the Man in White away, for that very night Mohammed had another dream. Again, the black men began tormenting him. Yet, when the peaceful, mysterious man in the white robe appeared, they all disappeared. He turned to Mohammed and asked, "Do you want my help?" Mohammed nodded. Once again the wonderful man in the shining white robe spoke to Mohammed as if he knew him personally. "I love you, my son!" Then Mohammed awoke.

"Baba, I had another dream," he told his father in the morning. "But I had

no fear because the man in the white robe protected me from evil. Father, I believe this is more than a dream.”

Father hastily replied, “No, you are being confused and harassed, just as the doctor said. You must keep on using the medicine. Then, in time, your mind will be healed.”

Mohammed obeyed his father, but none of the witch doctor’s medicine stopped the dreams from coming. He continued to have them for six nights in a row. And always the Man in the White Robe appeared to defend Mohammed from every evil assault. At the end of each dream, he would say in the warmest and most reassuring voice, “I love you, my son!”

On the seventh and final dream, Mohammed was given a most startling revelation. He finally discovered that the glorious man in white was the prophet, Isa, whom the Christians called Jesus Christ! In this last dream, Mohammed saw himself sitting under a tree in a lush, green, valley with misty waterfalls and warbling songbirds.

Beneath the tree were many books of various sizes and titles. He began picking them up at random, paging through them as if searching for something. He came to an especially large and heavy book, when suddenly beams of crystal white light began moving steadily toward him. From within the light, there emerged a figure and stood before him. The figure walked toward where Mohammed was sitting. “What are you reading, my son?” Mohammed noticed for the first time that he was holding the Christian’s holy book, the Bible. “Would you like my help in understanding my book?” the man asked.

Mohammed gazed into His face, and replied, “Yes!” In the next several moments he learned a shocking truth. In his dream, Jesus was telling him that He alone is the way to God! When Mohammed awoke, he knew he had to make a choice between Jesus Christ and the Muslim god, Allah.

To be continued....



youth messages

Are you waiting for the right time to be a “real Christian”?

When I was in my teens, I remember looking forward to my early twenties. I knew I was not yet a “man” and I was looking forward to

becoming one. I had habits that needed changing, I was not very dedicated to the Kingdom of heaven, and I was really anticipating that mysterious age when people “grow up.”

Surprisingly, my twentieth birthday came and went, and I was still the “boy” that I was in my teens. I still had my bad habits. My life was primarily consumed with getting out of life whatever I could get. I enjoyed being religious, but spiritual...? ... well..., to be really obedient to the Word of God would have required some sacrifices I was not yet ready to make. Maybe later something mysterious would happen and then I would become the person I was created to be...

Maybe you are still waiting for the “mysterious something” to happen to you, so you can become a “real Christian.” If so, you are no different than many people you know. Most people are waiting for something to happen to them, which will change them from what they are to what they know they should be. Once that mysterious thing happens, maybe then they can start being kind and pleasant around the house. Maybe then they can start helping the poor and witnessing to the lost. Maybe then they can resolve their bitterness. Maybe then they could... you get the picture.

One of our problems is that we are concerned about *getting* the most out of life. You might ask, “Is there anything wrong with this?”

On January 20, 1961, John F. Kennedy rallied his country with this invigorating plea, “My fellow

Americans: Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country!”

We, who are citizens of a different country, should be rallying each other with similar words, **“Ask not what The Kingdom can do for you - ask what you can do for The Kingdom!”**

This past winter, a group of students from CBS, donated their “off” Saturday to helping Arkansas tornado victims clean up their houses and yards. The rest of the students enjoyed a day of personal pleasure and relaxation. “Why did some students decide to *invest* their Saturday while the rest decided to *spend* it”?

The youth who decided to *invest* their Saturday, knew from past experience that they would come home after a hard day’s work with tired bodies but a heart full of joy. These were probably youth who were accustomed to sacrificing personal interests and comforts in behalf of others. When they got to Arkansas, the decision to do something for someone else was hardly a decision; it was a natural response that flowed from an internal character.

For those youth who chose to *spend* their day pursuing personal pleasure, it was hardly a decision for them either. It was probably a normal response that flowed from their internal character.

When a group of believers are personally committed to living “comfortably” rather than “sacrificially” it can be expected there will be a steady increase of church members who ask, “*What can the church do for me?*” rather than, “*What can I do for my church?*”

What are some hurdles you will need to cross, as you become a “real Christian”?

The first hurdle is that of your reputation. No one likes to be a fool for Christ, yet the Bible assures us a real Christian will need to follow God and let God take care of his reputation. “Real Christians” have at one time or another needed to sever certain friendships and cultivate other friendships in their place. This is a big hurdle; even for adults.

A second hurdle is spiritual disciplines. In a comfort-seeking society, there is not a vision for cultivating spiritual disciplines that will enable a person to endure hardness as a soldier for Christ. You will need to decide whether this is a hurdle you are willing to cross. A self-centered approach to the use of our time and money is quite attractive in the present, but is one that will eventually bring leanness to our soul.

A third hurdle you may need to cross is that of being willing to serve your Master, even if no one notices. When I was in my teens, I remember a minister making a statement like

this, “There is no telling how much the church could accomplish, if its members didn’t care who got the credit.” Knowing the frustrations this brother experienced in trying to rally the members of his congregation to *give* rather than to *get*, made me admire him for his perseverance. It’s been a few years since that brother went on to his reward, but his cry is as pertinent now as it was then.

A fourth hurdle that many youth are facing is how to live at peace with their church. This hurdle deserves some attention because of the epidemic that seems to have settled on churches in America.

Someone recently told me according to current statistics, it appears that every bishop is headed for either resignation or silencing during the next ten years.

If this is true, something is obviously wrong. Too many churches are weak and sickly! Too many people are asking, “*What can the church do for me?*” rather than, “*What can I do for my church?*”

We are living in an era when leaders are often not given the respect their position deserves. Their requests are often not heeded unless the subject believes the authority to be worthy of respect.

To be fair, I must readily acknowledge that for centuries, The Church has been plagued with too many leaders who have concerned

themselves with exposing the faults of others, but have not made opportunities for those under their rule to point out ways that they as leaders are not living blameless lives. This is a problem and the Scriptures give warning to those who “exercise authority like the Kings of the Gentiles” and lord it over the flock. Our current generation sometimes seems to be reacting to this abuse of authority.

Yet disobedience to leaders because they have not earned our respect is unscriptural. The Apostle Peter instructs us to be *subject*, not just to those who are good and gentle, but also to those who are hard to get along with.

Some of you may be in situations where you wish for leaders who are more mature, more courageous, more sensitive, or more concerned about living a blameless life. Your desires are legitimate. What will you do with your situation? Will you spend your life twiddling your thumbs, while you wait for them to change? And by the way, have you ever thought about how frustrating life may be for them? Have you ever considered how that someone as young as yourself could be the avenue by which they might consider their

ways? Could they be graced with your love and compassion? There are young people who have been an instrument of change in the lives of their superiors. Consider the young man Daniel who spoke kindly to the kings he served; or the maid from Israel who helped a wicked army captain learn about her God, even though he had snatched her away from her home.

Perhaps your leader is honorable, but is fearful. Perhaps he simply needs your encouragement to take the next step God wants him to take.

The point I wish to impress upon you is this, No leader, whether honorable or dishonorable, will ever flourish, as long as his subjects are selfish persons who typically take the path of least resistance and wait for someone else to take the first step. Don't wait on your church to get their act together. Don't wait for your boss to mature. Don't wait for some mysterious force to overshadow you and make you a different person.

Throw yourself into the work of the Kingdom. Allow God to remove wrong attitudes. Allow Him to change you from the inside out. This is something that can happen today.

-EE 

Next Month's QUESTION

What should youth want more than anything else?

THOUGHT GEMS

It seems to be easier to credit fate for ill fortune than for good fortune.



You won't get a mountaintop view unless you make the effort of a hard climb.



Adversity is the only diet that will reduce a swollen ego.



A real friend will tell you if you have spinach stuck in your teeth.



Some folks are interested in changing their jobs, mates, and friends, when they should be changing themselves.



It is better to teach a child the roots of labor than to hand them the fruits of yours.



A Christian is a person who makes it easier for other people to believe in God.



A true Christian has not lost his power to sin, but his desire to sin.



You need the church, the church needs you, and the world needs both.



Some resort areas seem to be surrounded by tropical plants—outstretched palms.



A person addicted to bad health habits is committing suicide on the installment plan.



Marriage is not a game; there are either two winners or none.

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Periodicals