



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

Galatians 6:14

DECEMBER 2011

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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.

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Mothers Like Mary

James Baer, Salmon Arm, BC

The world's in need of mothers;
We could use them by the score.
Especially those Christ-like ones,
"O Lord, send many more."

So many women are put off,
By the role of motherhood.
And would offer the pre-born child
To Molech, if they could.

For that is what abortion is,
Just like that god of old.
They offer sacrifice of life,
Of numbers yet untold.

Where are the moms like Mary,
The mother of our Lord?
Who said to angel Gabriel,
Your handmaid here, behold!

She bore the Baby Jesus.
To be our Savior dear.
Her strength was in her willingness,
Her resignation clear.

She faced the awful stigma
Of a birth without a man.
For the Holy One she bore that night
Was according to God's plan.

Her strength was also in her care,
She loved Him to the end.
As Simeon, the elder said,
Her heart He would yet rend.

Her child, her son, was Jesus,
The Messiah prophesied.
How could she fully understand?
His wisdom undenied.

He wandered on the feast day,
Into the temple grand.
Spoke there to astonished lawyers,
They could not understand.

The wisdom of a boy of twelve,
He lingered over long.
His parents then came seeking Him;
They'd lost Him in the throng.

Her strength was witnessed also,
In her willingness to yield,
And take the lower second place,
When He his power would wield.

At Cana on the wedding day,
He made the water wine;
His miracles began that day,
And Mary there resigned.

Then He had greater things to do,
A calling to fulfill.
She must not stay or hinder Him,
He must do the Father's will.

Was Mary proud of Jesus?
It did not cross her mind.
She would His supporter be.
No one more loyal would He find.

So strong she was and faithful,
And she showed her strength divine.
When close there at the cross she
stood,
She was not left behind.

But she had followed Him that day,
In His most awful hour.
And there in presence and in prayer,
She felt the cross' power.

He gave His life for Mary, too.
He turned to John that day.
And gave to him His mother's care,
And John led her away.
To oblivion? Of course not!

How many days had passed,
Until we find her in that room,
To pray and then to fast?

With other true believers,
As there His church was born,
She reached for His redemption,
Though He from her was torn.

God, give us moms like Mary,
So true and undefiled.
With motives pure and crucified,
With actions meek and mild.

The church will be triumphant,
Her sons be reconciled;
If we just have the moms and boys,
Like Mary and her child.

[From *The Northwest Ambassador*, May-
June, 2011. Used by permission.]



Life Inside the Fence

Watching my laying hens move about in their pen is interesting. If things are going well, they spend very little time at the fence, but if the grass gets short or there is unrest in the pen, it's different. Then they spend more time pacing right inside the fence, bent on getting out at the first opportunity. Fortunately, humans don't need to live like chickens. We have been given God's Word and God's Spirit to guide us in right living.

We may sometimes find it costly to honor our commitments. Our God, by contrast, does not waver in His covenants with His people.

It's when difficulties arise that we are tempted to be shifty. The good news is that God has ways of addressing that. He does it by calling us to repentance and by giving us new strength and desire to keep commitment. God's laws are life-giving. He does not arbitrarily impose regulations just so we know *He* is in charge; He does it so that *we* can have the best in life. If we stubbornly go down the wrong path, He comes after us. (Remember Balaam and his talking donkey; Numbers 22:22-35)

In marriage, we give our word

in the presence of God and well-wishing witnesses that we will be faithful to one spouse "till death do us part." Because the engagement commitment between the couple is in the bud stage (private and promissory), it comes into full bloom when it is confirmed and hallowed by a public ceremony that gives public recognition to the beginning of matrimony. Before the public ceremony, their pledge could be rescinded, but after marriage, God says it may no longer be changed. Jesus gives us reason to believe that marriage partners are actually joined by God when He says, "**What God has joined together, let not man put asunder**" (Matthew 19:6). The person who thinks he is free to walk out if he is unhappy does not change God's principles of permanence for marriage.

Fickle man finds devious ways of regarding marriage as less than a lifetime commitment. If major illness strikes or if some other life-altering disappointment occurs, unsettled persons may start looking for a way out. Usually the problem is simply that unselfish love was starved. Satan is skilled at offering excuses to make changeableness look noble. Love

dries up when focus of love changes to a second party—or to oneself. Such a disaster should be acknowledged for what it is: *a new object of affection crowding out earlier commitments of love and fidelity.*

The Prophet Malachi addressed an argumentative people on the subject of unfaithfulness in marriage, saying, **“Yet ye say, Wherefore? Because the LORD hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou hast dealt treacherously: Yet she is thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant. For the LORD, the God of Israel, saith that he hateth putting away...therefore take heed to your spirit that ye deal not treacherously”** (From Malachi 2:14 and 16). When people want to exit the covenant they made with the spouse of their youth, it is not unusual for them “to pace the fence like chickens” seeking some way to escape their commitment. Malachi “saw no hole in the fence.” Those who would make a hole in the fence pay an exorbitant price for their freedom.

Many married folks have experienced second thoughts that their choice of a marriage partner might not have been the best. When those thoughts come, we can learn from Jesus who said to Peter one day when Peter expressed the perhaps tempting (but very bad) idea that Jesus should sidestep God’s

plan of going on to Calvary. Jesus said, **“Get thee behind me, Satan”** (Matt. 16:23). We rightly approach a decision for marriage by asking God for direction, weighing our options, claiming the promise of His wisdom for our need, asking counsel from friends, using our best judgment, and moving ahead. After marriage, we must reject all wistful, contrary thoughts as unacceptable and evil.

The exception clause in Matthew 19:9 apparently refers to unfaithfulness and impurity before marriage because it specifies *fornication*, not *adultery*. Apparently, engaged Jewish couples were considered husband and wife even before their marriage was solemnized and consummated. That’s why the angel told Joseph, who at first thought Mary was guilty of immorality, that he shouldn’t put away his beloved Mary, **“Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost”** (Matthew 1:20). So we see that Mary was Joseph’s *wife during betrothal*.

In spite of God’s good provision, there are victims of divorce. Even though such persons are not eligible for marriage to another person while their estranged partner is living, they are eligible for venerable church membership, in spite of their plight.

Gloating over switched loyalty can make someone feel that they

have safely steered through a maze of problems, but that doesn't change God's will. Regardless of excuses, fickle irresponsibility greatly disappoints and displeases God.

Lost love may turn into spiteful rejection and come out into the open and yet be approved by society as just cause for divorce. If such animosity stays hidden from view, it nevertheless drains the lifeblood out of marriage. That is a grave condition that requires the ministrations of the Great Physician. Godly sorrow and true repentance is our work; healing is God's work.

When love fades in a marriage, Jesus shows the way to renew it. Bitterness and blame shifting don't help. When Jesus restores courage and joy, obligations turn into privileges.

Love is no longer expressed only out of duty. The Lord restores desire to do loving things for persons of covenant. Agreeing with God brings back "the joy of the Lord," and the desire to thrive where God has placed us. Praise God, at that point pacing the fence actually seems as foolish as it is!

"Know therefore that the LORD your God is God, the faithful God, who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, to a thousand generations" (Deuteronomy 7:9).

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Correction: I have a corrected telephone number for **Ridgeway Publications**. Here is that number: **585-798-0050**. Thank you for your patience. —PLM 

reader response

Re: The Back Door, Sept., p. 19.

I was actually disappointed in the writing about new Christians coming into the church, then leaving soon out the back door. I ask, "Who is to blame? They or we?"

When a convert comes into the church with happiness and contentment, even the changes of putting on godly apparel, what is my attitude? How do we accept these people. Is my faith toward them sincere and how big is my hospitality

to accept them into my circles and even into my home? Do I make room for them in my life by showing them I care and did I pray for them in faith? Do I really care or do I make excuses, saying, "They won't last long here."

Do I give that touch of friendliness with a caring and understanding love? Is my Christian life an example to them? Do I pray on my knees daily for their individual spiritual needs? Let us show our Christianity, not our doubts. Faith, caring with love,

and prayer must be a part of each Christian.

“Lord, increase my faith, help me show my works that are guided by You, and give me a patient mind.”

Sincerely, in Christ,

Arletha Yoder, Lowville, NY

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Dear Editor,

Thank you for printing Jeff Jarmon’s “The Back Door.” I can identify with those who have eyed the back door. After ten years of attending plain churches, we have decided to stay, but want to contribute to this dialogue.

We often feel very different from others in our church. Because of the lasting effects of sin on our family, we do not have the resources for vacations or even voluntary service trips, let alone second homes or pools. At times, our children do not know what to say to other children because of this.

We observe with curiosity and a deep sense of inadequacy, the orderly home and business affairs of our church brethren. We wonder if we will ever learn that which seems to be second nature to those who’ve enjoyed generations of stability. We are embarrassed and sometimes overwhelmed at the comparison.

Our blood families also bear the effects of sin, but usually do not appreciate the stands we take against working mothers, divorce and remarriage, mass media and

[for] modest dress. Family gatherings become strained. Some even make multiple attempts to draw our children away from the plain church and undermine parental authority. Our worldly employers rarely recognize a god higher than Mammon, so we face friction at work, too. Professing Christians in our lives are often our most outspoken enemies in terms of character assassination and the rumor mill.

Then we come to discover that some in our refuge, our church, wonder if we are serious, or if we have come for some perishing “loaves and fishes.” If we were after “help,” we could get it from suing at law or from various government agencies, without bothering with much personal accountability.

I once heard a Mennonite man remark, “Once people become Christians, it’s so hard to get them to where they can serve.” Really? Is that how Jesus dealt with the liberated demoniac of Gadara, or the seeking woman at the well in Samaria? I think a shared vision and purpose will do much to promote healing of the “graft sites” on the vine.

If seekers cannot find their place in the church, where can they go? Where can we serve in purity and holiness? How can we protect our children and teach them to serve the Lord within a church if we are not deemed ready to help with the

work? That is what finally led us to another plain church. The second one allowed us to sing at the rest home and participate in service. We didn't follow Christ just to dress plain. We really do want to glorify His name and show our lost loved ones the perfection of His way. Time is short. Can we overcome these obstacles in time to harvest more souls?

No name, please.

• • • • •

Re: Why Are We So Fascinated with Answers in Genesis? (Oct., page 5)

Thanks to Bro. Anderson for “turning on the lights” about our fascination with Answers in Genesis. Jesus and the Apostles taught from the Scriptures the heart and life changing message that reached the people.

When a heart and life is truly changed, where old things pass away and all things become new, the world can see a new creature in Christ Jesus. Let us point men to Answers in Jesus.

Clayton Weaver, Bastrop, TX

• • • • •

I was concerned when I read the article about Answers in Genesis and the Creation Museum. While the author may be correct that we may not meet many outright anti-creation atheists, the majority of people today believe or teach a dangerous mixture of creation and evolution in various forms.

Creation is not just the first couple of chapters of Genesis we are all familiar with. Creation is the foundation that the Gospel of salvation is built upon. Until a person believes that God made him out of nothing [dust of the earth] and therefore “owns” him, the idea of redemption or “buying back” from sin has little meaning.

Paul says in Philippians 1:8, “What then, Notwithstanding every way whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is preached, and therein, I do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice.” Let’s be careful not to shun truth just because it comes in a context we’re not comfortable with

John Bontrager, East Earl, PA 

Religion that is preoccupied with making people *feel* good instead of *being good* is *no good*.

Hindsight and Insight— A False Christ at Weavertown

Aaron Lapp, Kinzers, PA

Last Sunday (9-18-11) a lone hiker visited Weavertown Church, a young man perhaps in his 20's. Someone told me this man wants to talk with/to one of the church's elders.

After the morning service, he was still standing in the foyer, talking with Bill Chupp. I thought I should meet him. Everyone else had left. As I spoke with him, I soon realized the usual "visitor niceties" were not on his agenda. He was given to great profundity ("profound ideas with intellectual depth," New World dictionary). It was also clear not only that his "speech betrayeth thee," but also his breath. "Have you been smoking?" I asked.

"I was just outside to have a cigarette."

"That is very objectionable to me in this place," I said, as I faded back from him.

He said, "I have a message."

"Really?"

"Before Jesus comes again, someone must come before Him."

"I don't know about that," I offered.

"Get Revelation 1:8 in your Bible." I did so. I looked at it. "Read it out loud," he said. I obliged, reading, "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty." Then he said, "That is me!" I was shocked! This poor human wretch, without God and devoid of Christ, a mere speck of dust on the earth was claiming to be Jesus Christ!

He, with his tennis shoe-shod feet firmly set together, his arms straight down by his side, a substantial back pack on his head, repeated, "That is me!" He meant to be profound and he had that air about himself. To my ears and heart, his words were words of great deception—the greatest deception and blasphemy I ever heard.

Then he said, still standing erect in the stiffest military fashion, "I have a message for you." (Pause) "All Amish and Mennonites will go to heaven."

I'm sure my voice showed protest as I said, "Only those people who are saved by the Lord Jesus Christ will

go to heaven.” Whereupon he, with self-assured, prophetic erectness, repeated his statement.

I reiterated my disagreement, then my wife and I walked away. His last words were, “When I come again to this place, I will expect more respect.”

“Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed. For he that biddeth him God speed

is partaker of his evil deeds” (2 John 9-11).

To talk at length with such a person only solidifies the delusion and deception in their twisted minds. As far as I know, thankfully, no one invited the visitor to their house for lunch.

The Bottom Line is what Jesus said, “For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many. Then if any shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not. For there shall arise false Christs and false prophets” (Matthew 24:5, 23, 24). 

Modesty: Do We Need a Wake-Up Call?

Menno and Esther Kuhns, Cadwell, IL

This missive has come about over quite a period of time. It is basically addressed to sisters of our churches, although parts of it apply to brethren as leaders of the home.

Over the past 20-30 years, we have noted small changes taking place in our plain churches that seem to be moving in the direction of the world—the loss of conviction, the tendency to embrace the ideas that says standards aren’t necessary, and if the heart’s right, it doesn’t matter what’s on the outside. While the latter statement is very true, what is in the heart will

manifest itself on the exterior in how we make/buy our clothes, and in the size of our coverings.

In the last decade there seems to be a rush to see who can outdo the other with adding more extras (eye catchers) to our clothing and also dress/skirt styles that reveal what the Bible teaches we should conceal. So with these issues in mind, we share from a deep concern—where will this

road take us?

Bro. Simon Schrock has made several attempts at getting our attention with his book, *What Shall the Redeemed Wear?* and a tract, entitled, “Sisters, Please.” What will it take to get and hold our attention that it does matter how we dress? Our plea is to get into the Bible and make a serious effort to see and hear what God has spoken.

The principle of modesty is addressed several times in the New Testament. Both Paul and Peter were inspired by the Holy Spirit to bring it to our attention. In 1 Timothy 2:9, 10, **“That women adorn themselves in modest apparel with shamefacedness and sobriety, not with broided hair, or gold or pearl or with costly array, but that which becometh women professing godliness with good works,”** 1 Peter 3:2-5, speaking to all sisters and those with unbelieving husbands who are to be chaste in their walk of life: **“Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting of the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; but let it be that hidden man of the heart, in that which is is not corruptible, of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. For after this manner in the old time the holy women also who trusted**

in God, adorned themselves.” Philippians 4:5, says, **“Let your moderation be known to all men, the Lord is at hand.”**

Women by nature desire to be beautiful. We love to beautify our homes and make them attractive. We love the beauty of flowers in our gardens and around our homes. So wanting nice, attractive things is like second nature to us. But wait—is not this also a part of our carnal nature that we are supposed to keep under, especially when it comes to trying to make the body attractive? We want our children to look cute and so we dress them accordingly. Does this not expose the heart of the mother? How can we expect our little girls to develop convictions if they are used to wearing those adorable things when they are small? The carnal nature needs to be converted so we can discern true beauty and practice it.

Godly women welcome the admonition of these verses and don't feel hemmed in or restricted by them. But those who are dissatisfied with the command of God who are following practices that are questionable may well have a feeling of contempt when being reminded of what the Scriptures teach. They have eyes that have begun looking at those attractions that display a

worldly spirit. Their natural desires come to the fore and makes them very vulnerable. The eye gate is usually where lust begins. God didn't just command us to be modest and leave it there in principle only. He is specific and goes into detail. He even tells women to adorn themselves. Wow, doesn't that give us a little slack? Let's look at these terms and see what we can learn from a secular dictionary (SD) and from a Bible dictionary (BD):

Shamefacedness: (SD) reverence, its objective having a preference to others, it precedes and prevents a bad act.

Sobriety: (BD) calm, collected in spirit, temperate, dispassionate. (SD) quiet, plain, not bright or showy, garish, staid of color, clothes.

Plaiting of the hair: (BD) Hebrew women always wore their hair long and put up in plaits. Fashionable ladies were in the habit of curling artificial locks. The fashionable braided hair in which the Jewesses of a later date probably imitated the Roman ladies and is censured by the apostles as unsuited for Christians.

Both Peter and Paul warn against adorning the hair.

Wearing of gold and pearls: (BD) Both of these were worn as jewelry.

Putting on of apparel: (SD) Clothing, garments, attire; also,

anything that clothes or adorns.

Chaste conversation (walk of life): (BD) pure, not indulging in unlawful sexual activity, virtuous, said especially of women; not indecent, modest, restrained, and simple in style, not ornate, not extreme.

We note that some of these are things *we are to do* and some *we are not to do*. Peter especially brings out the things to do. "Let it be the hidden man of the heart." What's in the heart reveals itself. God asks for a meek and quiet spirit and holds the sisters who follow his teachings in high regard.

Let's take a look at what the early church stood for. David Bercot, in *Will the Real Heretics Please Stand Up* (p. 337-38). says, "The church discouraged the use of cosmetics and exhorted both genders to be content with simple clothing. Simple clothing was less costly, but luxurious clothing that cannot conceal the form of the body is no covering at all. Such clothing takes on a woman's figure so that the whole shape of her body is visible to spectators, even though they can't see the body itself, such clothing is meant for LOOKING and not covering."

To get very practical about clothing for our day and age, the principle is still there and also the command. Let's take a look at a few things that have appeared:

Skirt patterns: Do not the tight skirts that we see reveal the shape of the hips and thus expose the outline of the undergarment? Wouldn't a safer way be to allow plenty of material so that when sitting, stooping, standing, or walking, nothing would be exposed?

Waistline: It seems/appears to be the "in" thing to have a high waistline. Does that not tend to accentuate the bust? The other extreme of a long, low waistline draws more attention to the hips. Why not use the appropriate waistline that God gave?

Neckline: When the neckline is cut out more than is appropriate it draws attention to bare skin that should be covered, especially when bending over or forward in front of someone, there tends to be exposure she may not be aware of—or is she?

Short sleeves vs. long skirts: In the past 10-15 years, the practice of wearing long skirts has been fast becoming the norm, with some even almost dragging the floor. We ask, is this even practical or is it a stylish fad that appealed to someone and was then picked up by others? While all this was happening the sleeves began to creep upward, thereby exposing more skin. An acceptable modest approach in our churches has been to have the sleeve length below the elbow for casual wear and church

attendance. Now it seems to be the accepted/expected thing to have shorter and shorter sleeves which expose more and more skin, even for worship services.

Sweaters/Pullovers: Sweaters, when worn for warmth have been and are useful. The very nature of sweater material tends to cling to the body and may reveal the form we are to conceal, but when large enough serves a rightful purpose. Are sweaters or pullovers sometimes worn to hide the cape, whose purpose is to help conceal the body? When a tight pullover is worn, it not only hides the cape, but also reveals those lines that are to be unexposed. Are we ashamed of the cape?

Coverings: "Let her be veiled." This shows that she is subordinate to God first, then to her husband or all men. The "being covered" has a two-fold purpose: #1 It symbolizes our belief in God's chain of command or headship order. #2 The head is to be covered. We find a great variation of this practice. Some have much of their hair covered and usually have serenity about themselves that is to be aspired after. Others have very small coverings/veils that leave much of the hair exposed. The tendency is to wear these as a symbol only. It appears that the sisters in this group also have the problem of being

inconsistent in the rest of their attire.

Praise God for those dear sisters who have faithfully followed the Scriptural teachings as God has laid them out for us. We encourage you to continue being a good example. So now, are we addressing traditions that change with each generation and need to be taken seriously? Or is it revealing a deeper heart issue that needs conviction and repentance? Does our turning toward and embracing the freedom “to do as we please” show our lack of commitment to God’s Word? Does it reveal a leanness of soul? Do we honor our natural desires rather than honoring the Word of God? Do we make naught of the guidelines of the church which are made to support what the Bible teaches? Our elders have decoded the term, “modesty” to make it easier and safer for the church, rather than to have each individual decide for himself what it means. The children of Israel had an aversion to obeying God’s commands. Psalm 106: 15 says that God gave them their requests, but sent them “leanness of soul.”

We need sisters who rise to the challenge of being faithful followers

and examples. Let us not buy into the LIE that Satan used to trip up Eve when he said, “Hath God said?” As soon as we begin to question God’s Word, we open ourselves to becoming victims of the devil, who will take us farther and farther down the road of deception.

We submit this with great concern. A song that speaks the yearning of our hearts is,

“Cling to the Bible though all else be taken, Lose not its promises precious and sure.

Souls that are sleeping its echoes awoken, Drink from the fountain so peaceful, so pure.

“Cling to the Bible, this jewel, this treasure. Brings to us honor and saves fallen man.

Pearl whose great value no mortal can measure, Seek and secure it O soul, while you can.

“**Lamp** for the feet that in byways have wandered, **Guide** for the youth that would otherwise fall.

Hope for the sinner whose best days are squandered, **Staff** for the aged and best book of all.

“Cling to the Bible, Cling to the Bible, Cling to the Bible, our lamp and Guide.”



No one is too bad to go to church and no one is good enough to stay away.

marriages

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

Beiler-Mullet

Bro. Larry Ray, son of Kenneth and Anna Mary Beiler, Paradise, PA, and Sis. Karla, daughter of Myron and Judy Mullet, Abbeville, SC, at Cold Spring Mennonite Church on Oct. 22, 2011, by Myron Mullet.

Clemons-Overholt

Bro. Josh, son of Tim and Judy Clemmons, Aroda, VA, and Sis. Fanita, daughter of Donnie and Nancy Overholt, Aroda, VA, at Oak Grove Mennonite Church on Sept. 10, 2011, by Tim Miller.

Gerber-Wagler

Bro. Daniel, son of Mary and the late Mahlon Gerber, Millbank, ON, and Sis. Renita, daughter of Murray (and the late Miriam) and Hannah Wagler at Cedar Grove A.M. Church on Sept. 24, 2011, by Arthur Gerber.

Nisly-Mast

Bro. Matthew, son of Marvin and Rosa Nisly, Hutchinson, KS, and Sis. Andrea, daughter of Willard and Sharon Mast, Hutchinson, KS, at Maranatha Mennonite Church for Center A.M. Church on Oct. 22, 2011, by David M. Yoder.

Schlabach-Yoder

Bro. Martin Daniel, son of Oscar and Mary Sue Schlabach, Cochran, PA, and Sis. Kristina Kay, daughter of John and Carol Yoder, Townville, PA, at Pleasant View Mennonite Church on July 9, 2011, by Ervin Miller.

Schmidt-Kuepfer

Bro. Stephen, son of Ronald and Elizabeth Schmidt, Brunner, ON, and Sis. Sandra, daughter of Raymond and Laura Kuepfer, Millbank, ON, at Faith Mennonite for Cedar Grove A.M. Church on August 6, 2011, by Arthur Gerber.

Yoder-Troyer

Bro. Nicholas, son of Mervin and Rhoda Yoder, Russellville, OH, and Sis. Lynette, daughter of Duane and Virginia Troyer, Leesburg, OH, at First Baptist of Kettering for Faith and Light Mennonite on Oct. 15, 2011, by Duane Troyer.

cradle roll

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

Beachy, Durlin and Emily (Schlabach), Ruckersville, VA, second child and son, Alexander Quinn, Sept. 9, 2011.

Byler, Linnford and Amber (Martin), Whiteville, TN, second child, first dau., Johanna Beth, July 3, 2011.

Helmuth, Conrad and Amy (Yoder), Whiteville, TN, first child and dau., Casey Renae, June 11, 2011.

Helmuth, James and Janice (Miller), Wellman, IA, third child and dau., Sophie Kaylyn, born May 28, 2010, received for adoption Sept. 2, 2011.

Herschberger, Clint and Carolyn (Yoder), Tuscola, IL, first child and son, Braden Tyler, Sept. 10, 2011.

Iwashige, Shane and Dorcas (Kuepfer), Abbyville, KS, first child and son, Tristan Scott, Oct. 26, 2011.

Kanagy, Jeffrey and Rachel (Shank), Blackville, SC, first child and son, Stuart Jefferson, Oct. 7, 2011.

Nisly, Conrad and Judith (Brenneman), Partridge, KS, second child and son, Micah Dean, Oct. 28, 2011.

Nissley, Gary and Tina (Lengacher), Shipshewana, IN, fourth child, first son, Karey Andrik, Oct. 24, 2011.

Overholt, Travis and Lisa (Yoder), Kalona, IA, second child, first son, Tyrel Lewis, Sept. 13, 2011.

Steckly, Shane and Sharon (Kuepfer), Wingham, ON, sixth child, third dau., Carol Justine, July 26, 2011.

Stoll, Quinton Howard and Debra (Coblentz), Millwood, KY, second child,

first son, Neal Edward, Oct. 5, 2011.

Stoltzfus, Chester and Regina (Yoder), Wytheville, VA, sixth child, fifth son, (one deceased), Brandon Eric, Oct. 3, 2011.

Yoder, Keith and Julia (Stoll), Whiteville, TN, second child and dau., Laurissa Joy, May 26, 2011.

Yoder, Randall and Serena (Somers), Free Union, VA, fourth child, third son, Cornelius Shawn, Oct. 7, 2011.

Yoder, Wesley and Abigail (Yoder), Montezuma, GA, first child and son, Carson David, Sept. 16, 2011.

ordinations

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

Bro. Lawayne Weaver, 37, was chosen by lot and ordained to the office of deacon at Calvary Fellowship Mennonite Church, Blackville, SC, on Oct. 16, 2011. Preordination messages were given by Paul Beachy, of Bastrop, TX. The charge was given by Virgil Kanagy, assisted by Donnie Swartzentruber and Manfred McGrath. Aaron Mast and Jesse Miller were also in the lot.

Byler, Sadie M., 91, of Belleville, PA, died on Oct. 21, 2011, at the home of her niece. She was born in Huntingdon County, PA, daughter of the late John B. and Annie (Yoder) Byler.

She was a member of Pleasant View A.M. Church. She did housecleaning for a number of people in the Belleville area.

She was preceded in death by a sister, Rachel Kanagy. She is survived by a sister Julia A. Kurtz and husband Joseph E, of Belleville; a brother, Samuel K. Byler and wife Elsie of Mill Creek; and a number of special nieces and nephews.

The funeral was held on Oct. 25 at Pleasant View Church with ministers, Enos Kurtz and E. David Byler officiating. Burial was in the Allensville Mennonite Cemetery.

Helmuth, Ethel Mae (Miller), 67, died Aug. 31, 2011, in Kalona, IA. She was born Dec. 7, 1943, daughter of Fannie M. and the late Henry Miller.

She was a member of Sharon Bethel Church.

On Dec 8, 1964, she was married to Lynn Helmuth, who survives. Other survivors are five children: Julia (Alvin) Kramer, Loren (Lisa) Helmuth, Evelyn (Larry) Hershberger, Eldon (Shana) Helmuth, Ellis (Hannah) Helmuth, all of Kalona, IA; and 22 grandchildren. Also surviving are three sisters: Viola (Iddo) Yoder, Lott, TX; Mary Etta (Steve) Stoltzfus, Chestertown, MD; Ruby (Joni)

Stutzman, Kalona, IA; and one brother, Leslie Miller, Crete, IL.

The funeral was held at Sharon Bethel Church, with burial in the church cemetery in rural Kalona.

Nissley, Eli D., 77, of Huntland, TN, died at home on Sept. 9, 2011. He was born Dec. 20, 1933, son of the late Roy and Emma (Schrock) Nissley.

He was a member of the Belvidere Mennonite Church.

On January 27, 1955, he was married to Mary (Beachy). They were married 39 years. She preceded him in death on June 5, 1994. He married Lena Mae Troyer on February 10, 1995. He is survived by his wife of 16 years, three sons and five daughters: Emma (Alvin) Yoder, Lamar, MO; John (Viola) Nissley, Rutherford, TN; Irene (Ervin) Eicher, Sarcoxie, MO; Miriam (Nelson) Hershberger, Calhoun, IL; Elmina (Everett) Yoder, Paris, TN; Henry (Fannie) Nissley, Paris, TN; Mary Ruth (Ben) Miller, Pulaski, TN; Nathan Eli (Esther) Nissley, St. Genevieve, MO; 51 grandchildren, 12 great grandchildren; three brothers: Calvin, Oakland, MD; Amos, Lewisburg, KY; Ervin, Durand, WI; and one sister: Rosie Byler, Fillmore, NY.

He was preceded in death by two brothers and four sisters.

A memorial service was held at Belvidere on Sept 11. The funeral was held on Sept. 13, at Calvary Fellowship

Mennonite Church, Paris, TN, with Vernon Troyer, Robert Nissley, Stephen Beachy, and Alfred Beachy serving. Burial was in the church cemetery.

Yoder, Elsie Marie (Mullet), 82, of Montezuma, GA, passed peacefully away on Oct. 19, 2011. She was born Dec. 14, 1928, daughter of the late John David and Mary Ann (Miller) Mullet.

She was a faithful member of Montezuma Mennonite Church.

On July 3, 1981, she was married to Solomon W. Yoder, who preceded her in death in 2007.

Survivors include two step-daughters: Marie (Daniel) Swartzentruber, Montezuma, GA; Irene (Eli) Weaver, Greensburg, KY; three step-sons: William

(Marilyn) Yoder, LaRussell, MO; Enos (Oneta) Yoder, Barnwell, SC; Sol, Jr., (Georgeanna) Yoder, Montezuma, GA; one step son-in-law, Henry (Matilda) Overholt, Sr., 34 step-grandchildren; 149 step great grandchildren, 11 step great grandchildren; one sister-in-law, Amanda (Roman) Mullet, Sugarcreek, OH, and many nieces and nephews.

Preceding her in death were one step daughter, Verda (Mrs. Henry Overholt, Sr.), one step grandson, one infant step granddaughter, one step great grandson, two brothers and seven sisters.

The funeral was held on Oct. 23, at Montezuma Mennonite with Donny Swartzentruber, Daniel Yoder, Stephen Beachy, and Henry Overholt, Sr., serving. Burial was in the church cemetery. 

observations

Our daughter, Linda Rose, highlighted the following item from a letter in *The Budget* written on Sept. 9 by Mrs. Melvin Schrock, Markesen, WI. "Abe Troyer wanted to relocate a 36' X 72' shed on his farmstead. He decided to undertake the project with manpower. Many 2" X 4" handholds allowed some 238 men to participate. When the order was given they all heaved and then moved together. The move involved two changes of direction, but in 10 minutes the shed was placed on its new foundation."

Isn't it interesting in this day of

modern, high-dollar equipment that in this case a creative imagination, coupled with widespread support and united effort completed a project with minimal cost? This example of unity to accomplish a worthy goal also works well in many things besides moving a big building.



At present (Oct. 10) a protest movement against corporate greed is growing in a number of the large cities of our country. They complain that money from big companies can fund successful political campaigns that puts elected lawmakers under

obligation to support only such laws that are friendly to big business. I assume that such conclusions are accurate.

But greed or love of money can also affect people with ordinary means who are not a part of the corporate world. Christians should remember that which is called ownership is in fact stewardship for which we will give account to the true Owner.

The person who has acquired much is a poor person if he fails the test of stewardship. A sense of stewardship is eager to share with those in need and to support the furtherance of the Gospel. Successful operators with a corresponding sense of stewardship can be an important asset to the Christian community and a visible light to the world.



John Graw recently wrote a letter to *The Hutchinson News* that may be somewhat pertinent to the above discussion. Writer Graw says that he has studied the life of Abraham Lincoln and is impressed with his profound insights and concerns. Lincoln is quoted as follows: "We may congratulate ourselves that this cruel war (Civil War, 1860-1865) is nearly over...It has indeed been a trying hour for the Republic, but I see in the near future a crisis approaching that unnerves me and causes me to tremble for the safety of my country. Corporations have been

enthroned and an era of corruption in high places will follow...until all the wealth is gathered in a few hands and the Republic is destroyed. I feel at this moment more anxiety for the safety of my country than ever before, even in the midst of war."

For Christians to observe this and analyze it is alright. But it is far more important to keep ourselves from covetousness, which is idolatry.



A non-local church leader shared an incident that I found interesting: A couple was considering buying a house with some outbuildings that were in run-down condition. They asked the advice of two different persons. The first person told them, "I see nothing but problems." In his view the buildings should be destroyed. A second person saw nothing but opportunities. The couple took the advice of the second adviser. They have developed the place into an attractive home site.

I do not know who the persons are in the above incident. But the potential buyers were wise to seek counsel in such a major decision. In this case, a second opinion was important. A vision to see beyond the here and now is useful in other real life experiences. The visionary in the body of believers is entitled to a fair hearing from other members in the body.



There are good reasons why the word “Pharisee” has strongly negative connotations. Recently I came across Paul’s declaration that he was still a Pharisee (Acts 26:3), though he had become a Christian. How does one reconcile this with our negative impressions? It is true that Jesus strongly rebuked them for their self-centered and hypocritical leadership. Widows were objects of exploitation. They had stringent requirements for others, but were not subject to their own rules. They seem to have mastered the art of majoring in minors and ignoring the weightier matters of judgment, mercy and faith (Matthew 23:23).

How then could Paul as a Christian declare that he was a Pharisee? We must conclude that there was nothing inherently wrong about their identity. Being a Pharisee would have allowed, and probably encouraged kindness and generosity. But their religion became a “cloak of maliciousness,” devoid of godly characteristics. To have abandoned their religion would not have addressed their problem. To have put God first in their lives would put their religion in its proper place.

We do well to remember that external evidence of faith need not be a barrier to simply doing what is right. Ideally, it should be evidence of our willingness to be identified with Christ who has overcome the world.

• • • • •

Ken Redding, a Mennonite from Manitoba visited “Jim,” a prisoner at Stony Mountain Federal Penitentiary near Winnipeg. His written report has come to me courtesy of Ken Sensenig:

Jim is a former gang member. He was the enforcer. He was the most feared member of his gang...You did not want to deal with Jim.

One night in a rage over many things, including his lack of money and an argument with his ex-wife, also a gang member, he gets high on drugs and alcohol and decides to do what he normally would not do. He brazenly robs a convenience store and in his stupor believes he can get away with it. He gets 30 months for this little botched robbery.

I came into the reception area to visit him at Stony one evening and the first thing Jim says to me, “Sorry to hear what happened to your people.”

“What happened to my people?” I am confused.

“Well, the murder of those Amish girls.” Oh, Amish, Mennonite, ah, I don’t bother to explain. “Yes, horrible!”

“But how can those Amish forgive? What is forgiveness?” he asks.

I explain forgiveness as best I can in terms he would understand. It is fun to explain a theological concept to someone totally unfamiliar with our theological jargon. We have to

use different words.

Then he tells me a story. He tells me his brother died of a drug overdose a few months prior. But there is a story behind it. His brother was a diabetic on medication. Then their cousin, who is a drug dealer, offers him some hard stuff. His brother says no to the drugs, since he is on medication. But the cousin, interested in a sale, assures him that the hard stuff will not hurt him. He takes it. Gets high. Dies.

Everyone in the family and on the street knows what will happen next. As soon as Jim gets out of Stony, he will go after his cousin and beat him within an inch of his life or, more likely, kill him. Everyone is worried that will happen. The family is worried and his cousin is thoroughly frightened of Jim and believes that he will be killed.

So Jim asks me about forgiveness. Over the next few visits I hear some interesting things. Seems the guys inside Stony are watching the story on TV and cannot figure out how anyone can forgive. They can't believe what the Amish are doing. So Jim asks me for information on forgiveness. The *Mennonite Brethren Herald* just had an issue on the subject. I give that to him. Wilma Derksen writes an article for me to give him. Then he asks for a Bible.

Jim reads all of this and discusses it with the guys inside.

Then on one visit he tells me something spectacular. He has forgiven his cousin. He also has prayed for forgiveness for himself. He has become a Christian.

I must say I was stunned and then very happy. I gave him a big hug. He then proceeded to tell me—and I confirmed this later—that he had called his cousin, uncle and mother to say he had forgiven his cousin.

Jim has been out now for about a year. He has kept his word. He has not hurt his cousin. The actions of the Amish in Pennsylvania leaped over the walls of Stony Mountain Penitentiary in Manitoba. Because some Amish in Pennsylvania dared to think and act differently from the norm—biblically—Christ entered the life of at least one person.

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Eastern Mennonite Publications tells me that their book on Mode of Baptism I wrote about in this column in October is temporarily out of print. But they assure me that they do plan to reprint and they will honor back orders. At this point, they do not know just when the new printing will be available. The booklet will be available from Eastern Mennonite Publishers, phone: 717-733-7998.

—DLM 

Christmas Musings

Mary June Glick, Seneca, SC

As I think about writing for Christmas, my mind goes immediately to Luke 1:30, where the angel came to Mary and spoke these two words: “Fear not.” Then she gave her the assignment of becoming mother to the Messiah. The angel had earlier spoken these same words to Zacharias the priest with the announcement of John the Baptist’s birth. Later angels brought these same words to the shepherds who were watching their sheep. He told them the Messiah had been born that very night in a lowly stable in Bethlehem. The angel’s message also contains the beautiful words “Good tidings of great joy, of peace on earth and good will to men.” All these words are relevant to us in 2011.

Today some women have hearts filled with fear and anxiety as they think about Christmas. This past year may have brought grief into your home and you may wonder how you can get through this supposedly happy time of year. Your family may be scattered and not coming home for Christmas or maybe you are all alone. Perhaps you are experiencing heartaches within your family. You may be far away from your immediate family and homesick, wishing to be

at home. The words “fear not” are for you.

I remember our first Christmas in Belize, far away from family and friends. I longed to be back in Pennsylvania celebrating Christmas in a climate and culture familiar to me. However, I determined to make it a special time for our children and tried to bring some special blessing to others. I look back on that Christmas as one of our better Christmases. No, it was not like we were used to, we didn’t have any extended family with us. It was different from any Christmases we had known before. However, we celebrated the birth of Christ. He removes fear and gives us peace and joy.

Let’s look at ways to experience the true meaning of the angel’s message this Christmas season.

Prepare your heart.

Fill your heart with the message of Christmas. Ask God too, if there is anything in your heart you need to deal with—any ill will toward someone, feelings of discontent, or unconfessed sin—anything that may be hindering your peace with God and keeping you from experiencing joy. Read and meditate on the Christmas story in your quiet time. Sing or listen

to the beautiful songs of Christmas.

Remove stress from your life.

Removing stress may sound like an impossible order. Yes, we will always experience a certain amount of stress. However, I believe Christian women today may need to take a good look at their lives to see where and how we can reduce stress. We are busy people, yet we have many time savers. Perhaps we try to do too many extra things at Christmas. Learn to relax and enjoy life and enjoy your family.

Plan and prepare ahead.

Begin early, whether it is baking Christmas goodies, buying gifts, sending cards, and whatever. You can prepare frozen meals and baked goods weeks ahead to put in the freezer. I'm learning as a grandma to buy more gifts alike, perhaps for different age groups. One year, we bought pajamas for all the grandchildren. It might be blanket throws, Bibles, games, or puzzles. Our children come home for a few days and each of the couples plan one meal. I make the main Christmas dinner of rice and beans and chicken.

The children can learn to help. Maybe they could make the Christmas cards this year or other simple gifts.

Bless others.

The angel's message of joy and peace is a powerful tool for sharing Christ at Christmas. Who doesn't long for a touch of joy? I have discovered it is so simple to give. Do you realize that there are (maybe even

your neighbors) who don't receive Christmas cards? Try blessing them along with your usual friends this year. Older people often get hungry for a taste of homemade goodies and I have discovered they especially enjoy a slice of homemade pie. A Christmas decoration can bring cheer to an elderly person. Let your children be involved in sharing with the elderly. Clerks are often frazzled over holiday seasons. Give a kind word or a simple gift of thanks to doctors, mailmen, and schoolteachers. The list is endless either here at home or reaching out to the needy in other places of the world. Be sure to remember your missionaries at this special time of the year. And be sure to acknowledge a thoughtful token given to you.

Make your Christmas plans and activities Christ-centered.

Your home and family activities should portray the meaning of Christmas. It can be a happy family time, however, the focus needs to be on the celebration of Christ's birth. Some families have a birthday cake for Jesus; others give gifts of commitment written on paper to Jesus. The nativity figures, even though not 100% accurate, are a good way for children to understand. Establish a tradition for your family. Christmas programs, caroling, family devotions are tools to teach the Christmas message. Remember the message of the angels: **fear not, great joy, peace and good will. Jesus Christ is born!** 

Angels Around God's Church—Part Two

Mary Ellen Beachy, Dundee, OH

Do you remember the story of the church that was built in a barn and the letter the pastor received saying the church would be destroyed?

That night, the church gathered for their weekly prayer and praise meeting. The pastor loved his people, but he did not tell his people about the letter. He knew they already had many difficulties. They worked hard to have enough food to eat. He also knew that there would likely be men in church that night who were not true believers—men who would betray them. So they had their usual service. Joyous songs of praise filled the air. They were encouraged as they prayed and worshiped together.

The pastor knew God was in control of this church. He believed God could control ungodly authorities. For the next several days, he fasted and prayed.

Thursday afternoon he was home all alone. Mama and the children had gone to visit a sick neighbor. He locked the outside gate. He locked the door, too. He needed to be all alone with God. He read his Bible. He cried and prayed. He searched for peace and assurance that God would take care of their church.

Suddenly there was a man in the room with him, but the pastor was not afraid. The man asked, "What are you doing?" The pastor shared the letter from the police with this man. He told

him all about the trouble facing their church.

The man quietly listened and then told the pastor, "You are to do what Hezekiah did. Just do what Hezekiah did." Then the man turned and walked out the open bedroom door. The pastor followed him. When they came to the front door of the house, the door opened. They walked through. When they came to the locked front gate, that gate opened too, and they walked on out.

The pastor started to tell the man, "Thank you for coming," But the man was gone. He could not see him walking down the street. He looked all around. Where had the man gone? Who was the man?

He turned and walked back into his house. Only then did he remember that the doors and the gate had all been locked. How did this visitor get in? Surely God must have sent him! He sank to his knees in amazement. Had his visitor been a messenger from God? Had he talked to an angel?

He remembered what the man had told him, "Just do what Hezekiah did." He opened his worn black Bible and turned to 2 Kings 18 and 19 and Isaiah 36 and 37. Carefully, he read

and searched out the story of King Hezekiah. Then he knew what God wanted him to do.

That night, the church again gathered for a time for prayer and praise. After the service the pastor gathered his family and a few of his closest friends whom he knew were true disciples of Jesus. He shared the letter from the police with them. Together, they prayed for God's might and protection over their church. Then his friends went home and he tucked his children into bed.

Then the Pastor went back into the dark and empty church. He did what King Hezekiah had done many years ago. He spread the letter open on the pulpit; he prayed and cried to God to protect and bless his church. Then he took a paper and a pen and wrote a prayer letter to God. As he was writing there in the dark church, a light shone on his paper.

Only later did he realize that this was an unusual light. God's peace and presence warmly enfolded him there in the church. He was certain God would take care of his church. He was tired as he walked back to his house. He went to bed and slept soundly. God gave him peaceful rest!

Early the next morning, at 5:30, while the pastor and his family were still sound asleep, several large bulldozers came rumbling through their village. They turned into the street where the pastor lived and came to a stop in front of the church.

Some of the neighbors and church

members gathered in knots on the street to watch what would happen. Pastor Bulibenchí and his family woke up. They looked out their windows and saw the bulldozers and a large number of people in the street.

"Children," Papa said, as he gathered them in his strong arms, "Don't be afraid; don't worry; God is taking care of His church." The pastor, his wife, and children knelt to pray. They gave their day to God.

Then the pastor walked outside. He saw some of the church people crying. They were sad and scared to see the big bulldozers around the church. The pastor had worked so hard to build it. They loved to come and worship there. Would their church be wrecked and ruined?

Pastor Bulibenchí walked up to them. "God is taking care of this church house," he told them, "Just keep praying and looking to God."

Their pastor's faith in the true God encouraged and strengthened the people.

The big bulldozers were running and ready. The men who operated them waited for their boss to come and give his orders to start. Soon a large black car turned into the street. The Town Commissioner jumped out. He had the order from the Chief of Police to destroy the church. He walked toward the men waiting on the idling bulldozers. Suddenly, he stopped! He stared dumbfounded at the church house.

Just then another car drove up with

the assistant mayor. He got out, glanced at the church house, then stared stupidly. When he found his voice, he called out to the Town Commissioner, "Leave! Leave quickly! You cannot touch this church because of all the angels surrounding it!" When the Pastor heard this, he too turned to stare at the church. The sight he saw brought tears to his eyes and joy to his heart. A host of angels in shining white surrounded the church house! God had sent His Mighty Host to protect the church house! The pastor's heart was full of praise and blessing to God!

The Mayor left quickly. He spun down the road and around the corner. The Township Commissioner leaped into his car and took off! The bulldozers

roared to life and clanked away from the church house.

The people stood in silent amazement. The pastor lifted his hands and prayed a prayer of thanksgiving and worship to his all-powerful God!

For many years, the people met to worship in that church house. The sign at the front of the church read, "House of Prayer." Pastor Bulibenchi was the pastor until he was an old, old man. The letter that he wrote to God was in the front of the book of records. It was kept in the pulpit. The pulpit stood where the manger had been. There God fed His hungry children the Bread of Life. Where hungry cattle had once been fed, the people of God feasted on the precious words of God. 

youth messages

A Successful Failure

Vicki Kauffman, Thomaston, GA

Fears and phobias are not new to mankind. The list of phobias and their definitions is both educational and entertaining. There is *anthrophobia*, which is the fear of flowers and *podophobia*: the fear of feet. The king of them all? *Phobophobia*: the fear of phobias. (Fear fearing itself.) Ironically, that which gives a person *acrophobia* (fear of heights) his worst nightmare, is what allows a skydiver his greatest thrill. Fear is not a new concept to us. We deal with it and have to work to overcome it. A common fear is *atychiphobia*: fear of failure.

We see people refusing to try something new because they might fail. It may be something as simple as a recipe or something as weighty as a business venture. We don't want to try because it would devastate us if it wouldn't work. That's not so uncommon. But what about the fear of success? The fear that the recipe might turn out and the venture be profitable? That is practically unheard of!

Francis Chan, a very wise man, fears that very thing. He says, "Our greatest fear should not be of failure, but of succeeding in the things of life that

don't really matter." It sounds good and makes a neat-sounding line, but is it possible? How could one work so hard in life, and succeed in so many ways, to ultimately be a failure at what's most important in the end?

I'm reminded of another wise man from the Bible and wonder if Ecclesiastes would have been penned if Solomon would have feared this very thing from a young age. He had everything in life that one could possibly want. He had money, companionship, prestige, and power—all at his fingertips, and yet the book he wrote echoes with the hollowness of an empty life. He was successful in the wrong things, in the things that don't really matter and don't bring meaning and purpose to life. His life is an echo of so many people's lives today.

What would happen if Chan's fear would grip each person across the Christian landscape? What would it do not only to our vision and mission, but to Satan's objectives and plans for Christians, the most credible threats to his kingdom? Could it change our whole worldview?

The answer to this fear is not in sitting back and not doing anything at the risk of being successful in the wrong things. The Kingdom Call is one of action and service and its work is that of commitment and determination. So how then can a Kingdom worker succeed in the less important things in life? We need to remember that what we allow to brew in our minds, simmer in our

thoughts, and overflow in our passion is ultimately what we will succeed at. It could be work-related. A hobby. Even legitimate pleasures taken out of place. What we spend the most time doing and investing the most effort in, is what will shape and develop us.

Satan, the manipulator/deceiver, delights in twisting even good things into things that obsess us and ultimately choke us spiritually. He band-aids our conscience with soothing little lines such as, "You deserve it," and "Everybody needs a little fun once in a while." And so our soul goes off to sleep and we awaken only when some shocking thing comes along to show us just how futile and empty it is.

Sometimes we, like children, play the "dumb" card, pretending we don't know exactly what it is He wants of us and for us. Children are quite adept at this. They don't *quite* remember what they were told and if it was *exactly* that way. We try to convince ourselves and God that we don't fully understand and therefore cannot fully obey. God, however, is not fooled. He knows us perfectly and can see right through our perceived [assumed?] ignorance. And when there are times that we honestly don't know what He wants for us, His delight would be to show us. He won't show us, though, until we really want to know. And we won't want to know if it is not something that is important to us. How important is God's plan to each of us individually?

Not all things are so clearly defined in terms of right and wrong. There

are issues and decisions that come up and really become big to us. They may be the smallest of things, but they clutter our minds and distract us. Is the better question, “God, is it *ok* if I do this?” or “God, is it *best* for me to do this?” It turns from a prayer for permission into a prayer for perfection. Is there any way we can fail at the most important things when we are totally committed to His will and perfection? And if we are honest with God and ourselves, we will have to admit that sometimes the best things for us are the least desirable. Just like the most effective medicines are the least delicious.

As his followers, His children and for the sake of those children who have not yet heard of Him, we cannot afford to succeed in anything less than what He has called us to: a life surrendered to Him in active service wherever and however He chooses. And what about those things that make others “successful” but don’t ultimately matter? He will take care of them. They may be a healthy part of life, but they won’t consume us. And at the end of life, to hear Him say, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord,” will make everything completely worth it. How then can we fail? 

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Those who really want to worship the Lord aren't looking for people as cold as ice or sermons as dry as dust.

• • • • •

A person pays twice for cigarettes—once when he gets them and once when they get him.

• • • • •

Nothing improves some little boys' appearance as much as a washcloth, unless it's a haircut.

• • • • •

Shortages seem to be on the increase, but the worst of it is the terrible shortage of common sense.

• • • • •

Some complain that the stepping stones to success hurt their feet.

• • • • •

A bigot is a person who slams his opinion in your face.

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Great ideas don't seem to come from swelled heads.

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Music is an attempt to express emotions that are beyond speech.

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A persuasive leader can inspire men to have confidence in him; a great leader inspires men to have confidence in God at work in them.