



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

Galatians 6:14

APRIL 2006

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APRIL 2006

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 Saviour;
 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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A Struggling Heart

Violet Yoder · Danville, AL



The day looked long; my problems looked great;
I longed to be rid of this troublesome weight.
Why even live? Life seemed such a bore;
Where is the joy that I knew before?

Where is the victory in Jesus we find?
Is there no peace for this troubled mind?
I'm sick of living this worried life;
Is there no end to all of this strife?

There's only one way to victory I know;
I must give it to Him and peace He'll bestow.
"Forgive me, Lord, and cleanse me from this sin;
There's no other way but give up and give in."

I do surrender—regardless the cost;
I don't want to be eternally lost.
The battle of my heart God always knew;
My long-time dream may never come true.

But God knows best; it's Him I'll trust in
All things work for good to those who love Him.
So with that blessed promise I will just rest;
I'll trust Him to lead me, and give what is best!



Living and Dying in a Worthy Cause

The recent death of a teenaged neighbor who died as a soldier in Iraq makes the cost of military service for one's country very real to our community. The service awards posthumously given to the family indicate grateful recognition for their son and brother who gave his life in military service to this country.

Military service is obviously very serious. In nationalism, no patriotic sacrifice is seen as too great for the sake of one's homeland. With the storm clouds of terrorism hanging over us, we can easily get to thinking we must meet violence with violence.

Many Old Testament accounts of brave men whom God enabled to fight against His enemies support the idea of engaging in warfare. Take the case of David and Goliath in which God gave David courage to go in God's power against a giant who defied the armies of Israel and Israel's God. (1 Samuel 17)

An unusual situation demanding bravery is described in 1 Chronicles 11:22. It is the case of a hero who took up battle against the king of

beasts. Benaiah slew a lion in a pit on a snowy day. Both David and Benaiah, and many others, risked great danger to themselves and won God's approval. Obviously, confronting an armed, dangerous fellow human being is quite different from going after a cornered, snarling lion. I am amazed that Benaiah took on the challenge *in a pit*, of all places, and *on a snowy day*, of all times!

God still approves hunting animals, within good stewardship parameters. For a fuller understanding of His will for our relationships with our fellow human beings, however, we must go to the New Testament. Jesus gave us a new commandment in John 13:34, stating that we are to love one another as He has loved us.

How did he love us? He laid down His life for us.

When Jesus stood before Pilate, He was being grilled about His identity and His crime. He didn't deny being a king, but defined His kingdom as different from a typical political domain. He said, "My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants

fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence” (John 18:36). He is the king of all His subjects who render to Him supreme loyalty, even exceeding that which they give to earthly rulers. The Lord Jesus enables us to say with Peter and the other apostles, “We ought to obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29).

Peter speaks to the same issue and describes a loftier courage than that which answers violence with violence. He wrote to early Christians, “For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow in his steps” (1 Peter 2:21). Following Christ’s example takes tremendous courage. It runs counter to man’s idea of strength. Non-vengeance is easily misconstrued as weakness but, as Solomon pointed out, it requires great courage: For “...he who rules his spirit, [is better] than he who captures a city” (Proverbs 16:32b NIV).

Cassandra Costley spoke to our community on February 2, 2006, about that branch of Selective Service which she oversees: Alternative Service. Costley gave us much to think about. Even though there is currently no draft, she encouraged us to prepare for such an possibility. Every

young man who finds himself unable by conscience to serve his country by bearing arms would be expected to appear before a draft board, were a draft to come. The only thing that is presently required to qualify as a conscientious objector is to convince the draft board that he holds a sincere belief that *all war is wrong*. If only *some* wars are believed to be wrong, that constitutes a *political* objection to war. Conscientious objection may rest only on religious, moral or ethical grounds.

Costley further explained that it is important that these beliefs are held by the individual seeking exemption, not merely by his parents or the leaders in his denomination. The U.S. government is committed to strong leadership in the free world. Fortunately, it is also a gracious government, committed to respect for individual conscience. I believe our faith forefathers paid a very high price for many of the freedoms we have in this land today. Let us be grateful for our freedoms and for those who won them for us!

God still needs brave men. He calls men to follow Jesus and do anything for Him that He asks. That’s why evangelists have risked their lives to take the Gospel “into all the world” (Mark 16:15). That’s how it is that five

brave, young men went into the jungles of the Amazon in the early 1950's attempting to bring the saving Gospel of Jesus Christ to the Waodani (Auca) Indians. It is now just over 50 years ago, in January, 1956, that these five men were savagely speared, leaving their widows and children behind.

Because of a similar commitment, three Christians in Kenya narrowly missed making the supreme sacrifice on November 6, 2000. Almost every time I think of Joshua Otieno, Ken Miller and Gene Beachy, I remember how near death came to them that time. It stirs my heart with gratitude to God for sparing them and with admiration for those three men, whose story was told in the Youth section of *Calvary Messenger*, April, May, June, and July, 2002.

To suffer and die at the hands of angry men requires manliness and courage. I only hope that if I ever faced such a situation I would place my hands so firmly in God's hands that I would endure to the end. If my life were thus to be threatened, I pray I would not turn coward. Jesus made it clear: "Whosoever shall be

ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory..." (Luke 9:26).

Ashamed of Jesus? Afraid to die for Him? Looking for an easy way out? Does that reflect our level of commitment to bear the cross of Jesus? Woe is us if it does.

Much need exists in the world. Many are hungry and poor. Many are without the Good News of Jesus Christ. If I fail to volunteer for Christian service because I am not willing to make personal sacrifice and to give my life for the cause of Christ, my courage and commitment is well below that of the soldier who gives his life for the sake of the nation.

True commitment takes up God's priorities. God "...is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9b). Yes, there is a cause worth living and dying for! It is living and proclaiming "the Gospel of Christ—the power of God unto salvation" (Romans 1:16b). Hallelujah! —PLM



A real friend warms you by his presence,
trusts you with his secrets,
and remembers you in his prayers.

Calvary Messenger

Thanks a lot for...the *Calvary Messenger*. I read it cover to cover every month.

S. Y.

• • • • •

Brothers:

Bro. [J. Otis] Yoder felt very much at home with you conservative brethren. I think you would appreciate his final message, "Keep your Face in the

Book." His heart's desire was to keep in the middle of the straight and narrow way. So often the pendulum swings too far either way.

Please keep me on your mailing list. I enjoy your publication, especially the "Thought Gems."

May the Sovereign Father keep you doing His will in 2006.

Faithfully facing the future,

Isabel K. Yoder, *Heralds of Hope* 

Theophostic Counselling— Should We Be Concerned?

Davy Mast · Oswego, KS

What is theophostic counseling? It is scriptural? Should I be concerned about sending someone to a theophostic counselor? I have had numerous questions like this being asked by people wanting some direction on theophostic counseling. I don't have a definitive answer, but after doing some more research, I feel that I can better explain my concerns.

After being involved in counseling over the past eight years, and watching the theophostic movement develop and progress, I have some concerns about the core principles and philos-

ophies it was founded on. The intent of this article is not to tear down, but hope that it will help answer some questions being raised about it. Let me divide this into several sections:

1. My involvement with theophostic counseling
2. My understanding of theophostic counseling
3. Teachings and beliefs of Ed Smith (founder of theophostic counseling)
4. Dangers I see with the theophostic approach and way of thinking
5. My understanding of a more scriptural approach
6. Conclusion

1. My involvement with Ed Smith and theophostic counseling:

I was first introduced to theophostic counseling in 1998 at an International Center for Biblical Counseling (ICBC) seminar. Ed Smith was there and had several workshops describing his approach to counseling. I was uncomfortable with the amount of emphasis placed on talking directly to Jesus and having Him respond in a tangible way. However, after listening to some of his material on tape and talking to others who had attended some of his sessions, I came to the point of accepting this as another good, biblical approach to counseling. Over the next several years, I started using certain aspects of this approach in my own counseling. I also attended a Basic Theophostic Seminar in August, 2000, and felt what was presented was scripturally sound and helpful. As I reflect back on this time period, I realize, however, that I've never quite lost my wariness of getting too involved with the theophostic approach.

2. My understanding of what theophostic counseling is:

The three basic components of theophostic ministry include: 1) the memory picture, 2) the historical emotional "echo," and 3) the embedded original lie.

As I understand this method, the hurting person identifies the main emotion attached to what they are experiencing in the present, such as: feelings of rejection, loneliness, anger, worthlessness, and so on. The counselor encourages the individual to stir up or embrace this emotion.

As the individual embraces the emotion, he will ask Jesus to take him/her back to the origin and source of the emotion he/she is feeling or experiencing. Although there may be several memories encountered and healed along the way, Jesus will eventually take the individual back to the first time they felt this emotion, and they are to tell Jesus what happened in the memory. The individual will then ask Jesus to reveal any lies that the enemy has placed into his/her mind as a result of the incident being recalled. As the Holy Spirit identifies the lies to the individual, the person asks Jesus to show him/her the truth.

After He shows the individual what is true, Jesus removes the lies, the memory loses its power, and the pain associated with the memory is healed. At this point, every memory that is based on this lie is healed, since the lie had been replaced with truth. One can repeat this process with any negative emotion that is causing a spiritual struggle. The Scripture that

is used to support this is Jesus' words in John 8:32, "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

3. Some Teachings and Foundational Beliefs of Ed Smith

First let us look at what Ed Smith calls "Sin-Based Theology vs. Lie-Based Theology." Here is a direct quote from his book, *Beyond Tolerable Recovery*, (4th edition, copyright 2000):

"I have come to believe that there is a fundamental misconception about the root of sinful behavior (in the true Christian) and the reasons that many people struggle with sin throughout their Christian lives.

"The fundamental misconception I am describing is what I call sin-based theology. Sin-based theology believes that the root of my problem is sin. It says, 'Because I have sinned I suffer and am in pain. To be free of my pain I must repent of my sin, confess it to God, and choose to obey and apply the truth of God's Word. By this I can walk in victory.' The trouble with this belief is it doesn't work....Is what we are doing producing 'maintenance-free victory' by confessing, repenting, and trying really hard? I believe this theology is producing a church who denies her true state of woundedness.

"Let me say unequivocally that I believe that man is born as a fallen creature, totally separated from God. I believe that through Adam all are fallen. I believe that apart from the atoning blood of the Lord Jesus Christ no man is made right with God. I am not in any way, form or fashion saying we are not responsible for our life choices. We will all stand before God to give an account for every word, thought or deed.

"What I am saying is, before Christ we were fallen creatures lost in sin, but have become new creatures in Christ Jesus (that is those who have received Him in faith.) When I come to Jesus He doesn't just say I am righteous; He makes me righteous and 'all things become brand new.' But my mind remains in need of renewal. The source of my sin problem is no longer in my heart since I now share the very heart of Jesus for I have become a 'partaker of the divine nature.' My trouble is now in my mind with lie-based thinking.

"This sin-based theology believes the reason we walk in defeat is because we have a sin nature and we choose to sin rather than choose to walk in righteousness. I have come to realize this is a misconception and a grave error. This belief condemns us to a perpetual cycle of confession

and defeat. This belief also forces us to focus on overcoming sin rather than dealing with the lies which are keeping us in captivity. The problem with this perspective is that if we choose to focus on overcoming sin, we will wind up in legalism, perfectionism, and self-effort. Self-effort is not and never was the means by which God intended us to overcome sin and live victoriously.” (page 224, end of quote)

Another issue is Smith’s definition of repentance. According to Ed Smith, (*Beyond Tolerable Recovery*), this is one of three misconceptions that comes from this sin-based theology. I quote:

“Third is the belief that if we are to overcome sin and walk victoriously, we must first be willing and choose to turn from sin and turn to God. We call this act repentance. On the surface this seems right...if we mean that we must mentally choose to turn to God as our only hope of redemption from beginning to end, then this is a valid truth. But if we mean by repentance a willful choice to turn away from sin (choose not to do it any more) then this is an impossibility and is the first step in works salvation.

“The fundamental problem here is twofold. First, turning from sin is another act of self-effort and not faith or grace. Second, the act of turning from

sin is not a New Testament Biblical Concept. The very word repentance itself does not mean to turn from anything. The original word meaning was simply the change of one’s mind.

“True repentance is a gift that must be received from God like every other good thing that ‘comes down from the Father of lights.’

“True repentance (change of mind) is the consequence of God’s abundant mercy and kindness toward us.

“True repentance comes as a result of inner emotional sorrow over our sinfulness.

“True repentance is the inner mental change which occurs when God intercedes on our behalf in the darkness of our false thinking. When we know the truth experientially, we can walk in true victory.” (page 227, end of quote)

As I see it, the logical conclusion to Ed Smith’s philosophy is: Before I was saved, I had a sin nature and sinned because I wanted to sin. Once I became saved, I no longer sin by choice, instead I am simply living out the lie that I believe because of some past experience. So in order to be free from ongoing sin, I need to find the lie behind my current sinful behavior. Once it is replaced with truth, I will no longer struggle with this temptation.

The differences I see between lie-based theology and sin-based theology is:

1. Lie-based theology says that:

a) I must find the lie that I have believed as a result of a negative or painful experience I had before I became a Christian and replace it with truth.

b) The Christian life is not necessarily a daily choice to follow God and reject sin. Sin is no longer a choice, but a result of a lie that I have believed.

2. Sin-based theology says that:

a) My struggle with sin is a direct result of my own selfishness and carnal nature.

b) Salvation is a gift from God, and I need to continue saying “Yes” to God and “No” to my own carnal desires.

I believe pain and suffering are results of sin. Jesus forgave my sins on Calvary, but I still need to live with the consequences of past choices. I also believe some of our suffering is the result of someone else’s sin against us. That is where I need to forgive. I believe in sin-based theology which says I must take personal responsibility for my sins, both past and present, and I still need to deal with my carnal nature on a daily basis. Victory over sin is possible, not by myself, but with the aid of the Holy Spirit within me.

4. Some dangers of the theophostic approach and way of thinking:

I see theophostic counseling as allowing us to take an easier way than forgiveness. It puts the emphasis on Jesus’ healing without needing to walk the harder route of facing my pain and choosing to forgive anyway. It minimizes the need for brokenness and dying to self. Forgiveness, I believe, is my not only releasing those who have treated me wrongly, but also accepting or paying for the pain it caused me. The theophostic approach seems to allow me to bypass forgiveness as long as I don’t believe the lies the enemy places in these memories.

I see theophostic counseling as taking away my need to take personal responsibility for my actions, especially if we believe in lie-based theology, rather than sin-based theology. It minimizes carnal issues like selfishness, greed, pride, rebellion and so on. Instead of dealing with my carnal desires or flesh and daily putting on the mind of Christ, I now find the lie behind my behavior, and once it is replaced with truth, the claim is, I am free from the desire to sin or be selfish. This also minimizes the need for a daily brokenness before God.

I believe the theophostic emphasis on experience takes away from the

principle of living by faith. Instead of accepting God as sovereign and trusting him even when I don't understand, I now rely on experiences to comfort me. I have seen individuals who continually need to be recharged with another theophostic moment.

In the church, I see theophostic counseling as encouraging unwholesome individualism, rather than building within the body of Christ. It would seem to encourage individuals to elevate personal experience or a direct revelation from God above the wise counsel of others. Furthermore, what God reveals to the individual seems to override what anyone else may think or believe.

It seems theophostic counseling overemphasizes feeling good about myself. I believe it is important to understand how much God loves me, and how special I am to God; however, God's love for me is not based on how worthy I am, but on the very nature of God. We need to recognize our nothingness without God, while at the same time recognizing our adoption and completeness in Christ. Without Christ, I am not worthy of God's love. With Christ, I am accepted in Him.

5. A More Biblical Approach to Counseling

I believe our past has a large effect

on our present experience and outlook. We all react out of things that happened in our past. I don't believe the answer is simply "to try harder." We need to work through painful experiences in our past. I encourage people to work through these painful memories through forgiveness. I have them list how individuals have hurt them, then encourage them to choose to forgive, even though it's not fair and they might not feel like forgiving. Many of us forgive intellectually, but fail to deal with the pain and the lies that these painful memories bring. Part of the healing comes with recognizing and admitting what happened, accepting (choosing to pay) the pain, releasing the individual who hurt us, and asking Jesus to heal the pain.

Sometimes when an individual has a hard time praying through forgiveness because of the intensity of the pain associated with the memories, I will have them tell Jesus what they were feeling and experiencing. I will then have them ask Jesus if He was there and if He cared. Or, I may ask Jesus to speak peace into the memory. In this way, I am using part of the theophostic approach. However, this is all done as a part of choosing to forgive.

Here is an example: Several years ago I was working with a young

man who wanted help. We worked through forgiveness toward his parents. Several weeks after meeting with him, he called me and said something had earlier happened with his parents and he realized he still had a lot of anger towards them. One memory in particular came back to him. I asked him to tell Jesus what he remembered from that day. He told Jesus how he remembered his parents arguing before Dad left for work. Later, they were again arguing on the phone. He remembered being afraid to ask Mom for lunch because of her anger. When he did, she responded with, "You're not worth fixing lunch for; fix it yourself."

He remembered crying himself to sleep that night. I asked him to ask Jesus if He was there and if He cared about the little boy. He told Jesus how he felt so alone, like it was all his fault, and that nobody cared about him. After a few moments, he said the picture that came to his mind was of a little boy kneeling beside his bed praying and Jesus was up in the corner of the room watching. I told him to tell Jesus that he knows that He was there but that the little boy needs someone to hold him. Suddenly, he started weeping and I waited. After he was done, I asked him what had happened. He said that Jesus came down and held

the little boy and told him He loved him and that he would be alright.

So, now that he has forgiven, does that mean he will forget what happened? I don't think so, but the memory doesn't have pain anymore. Now, when he thinks about what happened, instead of the pain of rejection, he remembers Jesus holding and caring for him—a little boy who felt rejected by those he trusted to love him.

6. Conclusion

At his point, I am not totally opposed to the theophostic method of counseling. I realize that many people have been genuinely helped by this approach. I am concerned about some of the philosophy it is built upon, especially as I see some of these ideas being lived out. I recognize and am thankful that God wants each of us to be whole and complete in Him. I also believe that God has provided everything necessary for us to find and live in true freedom. May we all experience His love and forgiveness in our lives, so we can love and forgive others from the heart.



marriages

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

Beachy-Hershberger

Bro. Michael, son of Jay and Martha Beachy, Sugarcreek, OH, and Sis. Londa, daughter of Ivan and Treva Hershberger, Due West, SC, at Cold Spring Mennonite Church, Abbeville, SC, on Feb. 18, 2006, by Ernest Hochstetler.

Fisher-Stoll

Bro. Gene, son of Sam and Sarah Fisher, Abbeville, SC, and Sis. Charity, daughter of Robert and Rose Stoll, Donalds, SC, at Cold Spring Mennonite Church, Abbeville, SC, on Oct. 8, 2005, by Ernest Hochstetler.

Jantzi-Gerber

Bro. Allen, son of Kenneth and Bernita Jantzi, Wellesley, ON, and Sis. Linda, daughter of Mahlon and Mary Gerber, Millbank, ON, at Cedar Grove A. M. Church on Oct. 1, 2005, by Arthur Gerber.

cradle roll

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

Beiler, Chris and Ruth (Zook), Churchtown, PA, fifth child, second son, Anthony James, Jan. 16, 2006.

Miller-Miller

Bro. Josias, son of Noah and Edna (Miller) Miller, Baltic, OH, and Sis. Sharon, daughter of Eli and Carol (Kaufman) Miller, Newcomerstown, OH, at Maranatha Fellowship Church, on Oct. 1, 2005, by Roman B. Mullet.

Kensinger-Yoder

Bro. Caleb Daniel, son of Daniel and Louise (Kaufman) Kensinger, Mechanicstown, OH, and Sis. Jessica Ruth, daughter of Floyd and Marlene (Miller) Yoder, Newcomerstown, OH, at Maranatha Fellowship Church, on Oct. 15, 2005, by Roman B. Mullet.

Yoder-Graber

Bro. Stanley, son of David J. and Rose Yoder, Auburn, KY, and Sis. Marsha, daughter of Delmar and Kathy Graber, Auburn, KY, at Plainview Mennonite Church, for Providence Mennonite Fellowship, on Feb. 4, 2006, by David Yoder, Jr.

Beiler, Paul and Rosanna (Lapp), Free Union, VA, fourth child, second dau., Alicia Katie, Feb. 9, 2006.

Chupp, Glen and Katherine (Yoder), Watkins, MN, fourth child, third dau., Kristina Faith, Jan. 26, 2006.

Gerber, Clare and Gwen (Zehr), Wingham, ON, eighth child, third son, Caleb David, Feb. 7, 2006.

Gerber, Glen and Karen (Wagler), Gadshill, ON, third child, first dau., Angela Fern, Jan. 3, 2006.

Gerber, Ralph and Bernice (Wagler), Millbank, ON, fifth child, third son, Jeremy Lucas, Jan. 26, 2006.

Gerber, Timothy and Mary Beth (Wagler), Gadshill, ON, fourth child, second dau., Jennifer Dawn, Jan. 27, 2006.

Glick, Myron and Joleen (Lapp), Himrod, NY, second child, first son, Landon Jace, Dec. 12, 2005.

Graber, Allen and Rosa (Yoder), Bloomfield, IN, first child and son, Jethro Lee, Jan. 11, 2006.

Graber, Myron and Joanna (Wagler), Montgomery, IN, second child, first dau., Audrey Mai, Jan. 28, 2006.

Horst, Calvin and Sara Lynn (Stoltzfus), New Hamburg, ON, second child and dau., Trudy Nicole, Feb. 3, 2006.

Hostetler, Jesse and Mary Ann (Yoder), Belleville, PA, first child and dau., Jessica Ann, Jan. 21, 2006.

King, Ivan and Verna (Hostetler), Lyndon, KS, first child and dau., Ruthann Lillian, Jan. 24, 2006.

Lapp, Marcus and Carmen (Zook), Burgettstown, PA, fourth child, third dau.,

Megan Elizabeth, Dec. 9, 2005.

Mast, Philip and Grace (Lapp), Liberia, West Africa, third child, second son, Devin Durrell, Feb. 16, 2006.

Mast, Steve and Heidi (Yoder), Advance, MO, third child, second dau., Denise Rose, Dec. 7, 2005.

Miller, Richard and Mary (Glick), Oriskany Falls, NY, seventh child, second son, Matthias Lavern, Jan. 23, 2006.

Miller, Robert and Regina (Yoder), Sugarcreek, OH, sixth child, second dau., Angela Jean, Nov. 1, 2005.

Nisly, Wayne and Leona (Stoltzfus), Due West, SC, fifth child, third son, Landon Kyle, Nov. 1, 2005.

Overholt, Lewis and Marge (Wagler), Scranton, KS, second child and son, Austin Jon, Jan. 20, 2006.

Sharp, Dan and Karen (Miller), Belleville, PA, sixth child, fourth son, Daniel Lynford, Feb. 26, 2006.

Stoll, Darris and Karla (Yoder), Due West, SC, third child and son, Kadin Wade, Feb. 11, 2006.

Stoltzfus, Mervin and Nancy (Stoltzfus), Honey Brook, PA, eighth child, third dau., Kaylene Sue, Feb. 17, 2006.

Troyer, David Lee and Barb (Miller), Leesburg, OH, sixth child, third dau., Jerica Rochelle, Dec. 16, 2005.

Wagler, Jeremiah and Marie (Graber), Odon, IN, second child, first dau., Des-

tiny Dawn, Nov. 7, 2005.

Wagler, Matthew and Erma Jean (Miller), Odon, IN, first child and dau., Abigail Brooke, Feb. 9, 2006.

Yoder, Aaron and Debra (Yoder), Montezuma, GA, first child and dau., Breonna Joy, Jan. 7, 2006.

Yoder, Gary and Jeanetta (Stoll), Abbeville, SC, third child, second dau., Kailee Faith, Dec. 23, 2005.

Yoder, Gene and Amy (King), Partridge, KS, second child, first dau., Charissa

Nicole, Feb. 7, 2006.

Yoder, John and Renita (Kuepfer), Arlington, KS, first child and son, Jeremy David, Feb. 8, 2006.

Yoder, Roman and Brenda (Miller), Belvidere, TN, second child, first son, Nolan Vincent, Feb. 11, 2006.

Yutzy, Merlin and Mary Lou (Glick), Ronks, PA, second child and dau., Kira Mary, Feb. 6, 2006.

ordinations

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

Bro. Joseph Miller, 40, was ordained to the office of deacon at Bethel Fellowship Church, Berlin, OH, on Nov. 6, 2005. Preordination messages were brought by several ministers from neighboring churches.

obituaries

Hershberger, Elmer J., 92, died at his home, Due West, SC, Jan. 11, 2006. He was born Jan. 14, 1914, in Geauga County, Ohio, son of the late Joseph I. and Mary Ann (Miller) Hershberger.

He was a member of Cold Spring Mennonite Church.

The charge was given by Bill Mullet, assisted by Jonas J. E. Miller and Roman Mullet. Sharing the lot was Tyrannus Troyer.

Bro. E. Ray Yoder, 51, Cedar Creek, TX, was ordained to the office of bishop Nov. 16, 2005, at Grace Mennonite Fellowship, Bastrop, TX. The charge was given by Elmer Smucker. Serving with Ray are Reuben Kaufman, Clayton Weaver, and Paul Beachy.

On Jan. 18, 1942, he was married to Sarah Bontrager, who survives. Also surviving are four sons: Merlin (Pam), Sarasota, FL; Daniel (Marilyn), Due West, SC; James (Ann), Harrisonburg, VA; Duane (Ruth), Harrisonburg, VA; and two daughters: Martha (Clair) Steiner, Hendersonville, NC; and Mary (David) Kraybill, Columbus, OH; 23 grandchildren; 21 great grandchildren;

and two sisters: Fannie Overholt, Auburn KY; and Katie (Bill) Stoll, Abbeville, SC.

Four brothers preceded him in death: Jonas, Jake, Joe and Andy Hershberger. Funeral services were held at Cold Spring Mennonite Church, with Ernest Hochstetler, Titus Overholt, Merl Beiler and Billy Stoll serving. Burial was in the Cold Spring Cemetery.

Jantzi, Ezra N., 90, died Jan. 30, 2006, at Nithview Home, New Hamburg, ON. He was born June 10, 1915, in Mornington Township, son of the late Menno and Susan (Nafziger) Jantzi.

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

On Feb. 8, 1938, he was married to Katie Lichty, who is deceased. Survivors include children: Gerald (Bernadette) Jantzi, Wellesley; Marlene (Floyd) Martin, Kitchener; Reta (Enos) Gerber, Milverton; daughter-in-law: Edna Jantzi, Wellesley; brothers, Nicholas Jantzi, Leonard (Mary) Jantzi; sisters: Laurene (Floyd) Kuepfer; Katie (Aaron) Jantzi; sisters-in-law: Katie Jantzi, Elmina, and Katie Jantzi-Wagler.

Preceding him in death were his wife in 2004; son Raymond in 1979; brothers and sisters-in-laws: Samuel and Katie,

Elmer, Norman and Laurene, Harvey, Claytus and Fannie, Aaron and Mary Jantzi; sister Amanda, and Emmanuel Gerber; brothers-in-law: Harvey Carrick and Arthur Duval.

Miller, Catherine Edna, 89, of Eden Valley, MN, died Jan. 3, 2006. She was born in rural Hutchinson, KS, July 29, 1916, daughter of the late Menno C. and Mary (Miller) Yoder.

She was a member of Believers Fellowship Church, Grove City, MN.

On Dec. 9, 1937, she was married to Joseph A. Miller at Hutchinson, KS. He died July 20, 1999.

Surviving are three children: Ruby (Mrs. Dan Doan), Independence, MO; Jerry (Neoma) Miller, Eden Valley, MN; and David K. Miller, Grove City, MN; eight grandchildren, and 15 great grandchildren.

She was preceded in death by a daughter, Mary Beth Olson; a grandson, nine brothers and two sisters.

Funeral services were held Jan. 7 at the Evangelical Free Church in Paynesville, with Melvin Beiler, David M. Yoder, Paul Chupp and Abe Yoder, serving. Burial was in the Burr Oak Cemetery.



*God is never more
than a prayer away.*

observations

The Indian Ocean tsunami of December 26, 2004, Hurricane Katrina in August, 2005, and an unusual number of other major disasters have visited us. There has been a widespread and generous response of giving to relief. This is most certainly commendable.

Disasters are just that. They deserve prompt and generous response. However, while some mission organizations which are active in disaster work saw their funds increase last year, other mission organizations in the conservative Anabaptist sector experienced serious decreases.

Since it simply would not work for longer-term ministries to cease operations, this is an appeal for donors to maintain their giving to both interests rather than assuming that longer-term ministries will somehow survive without adequate funding to meet their continuing needs.

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It is truly thankworthy to live under a democratic government. Freedom of religion, a free press and freedom for lawful assembly may well be the exception for Christians both historically and currently.

The election in the West Bank and Gaza, which gave Hamas a solid

victory is a reminder that majority rule is only as good as the voting constituency. Hamas are considered a terrorist group. They advocate Islamic domination of the world and the destruction of Israel. President Bush has said that he cannot recognize such a government as legitimate.

These things should remind us that it takes more than a majority vote to make something right. It should remind us that to serve the Lord without active participation in secular government is scripturally defensible.

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A mega church has been defined as having a weekly attendance of more than 2,000. At present there are 1,200 such churches, twice the number of five years ago. News Service says such churches are characterized by dynamic leadership, highly-structured youth programs, and adult home fellowships. (*Mennonite Weekly Review*, 2-20-06) It is obviously not possible for such large numbers of people to experience close fellowship. So it is not only natural but needful for smaller groups to form for mutual exhortation and fellowship. When small groups have a foregone commitment of loyalty to the larger body it can be a blessing to all concerned.

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J. Daryl Byler directs the Washington office of Mennonite Central Committee. In the 2-20-06 issue of MWR, he offers some interesting perspectives and observations on Iran. Iran's government says they are developing atomic energy for peaceful purposes. The international community is uneasy, fearing that they want to develop nuclear weapons. Byler, who traveled in Iran with two MCC colleagues, notes the following:

—They were warmly welcomed by both Muslim and Christian leaders and public and private officials.

—The Iranians spoke openly about their hopes and concerns. They have questions about their new president.

—An astonishing 60% of Iran's population is under age 25. Byler and his comrades heard many comments indicating that they are deeply influenced by Western culture and are eager for reform. They also defend Iran's right to develop nuclear energy.

—A U. S. military strike would further destabilize an already unstable situation and would likely cause the young population to support Iran's hard-line leaders.

—Iran has invited the United States to help them develop their nuclear energy.

—Military action by the U.S. could create a situation that would make

the conflict in Iraq look small by comparison.

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"Who Owns the Land?" is the title of an article in the current issue of the *Christian Contender*. (3-06) This article by Steven Horst touches on the history of Russian Mennonites who in their earlier experience in Prussia were denied the privilege of land ownership. When Catherine the Great from Russia offered them free land and military exemption, it was eagerly accepted.

The Mennonites were generally industrious and thrifty. Life at first was very difficult. But eventually the raw land was developed into thriving, prosperous communities. The native peasants seem to have lacked management and stewardship skills. Many of them became jealous and bitter toward the Mennonites, partly because of their wealth.

Other records indicate that too many Mennonites failed to treat their hired peasant help with respect and adequate pay. There were, however, notable exceptions.

Historians believe that the presence of these wealthy landowners was an important factor in the revolution of 1917 that led to the rise of Communism in the Soviet Union. Many Mennonite land owners lost their

land and were killed during the war.

The article warns against extravagant lifestyles reflected in homes, food and transportation. Ownership of things including land has no value beyond this life. Ultimately, God is owner of all temporal things. Our stewardship is only temporary.

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On the question of stewardship, it is a common practice that what is left when parents die goes to their children. This seems right from the perspective that that is an expression of gratitude to children who have invested significant energies to support their parents' welfare. But in the case of larger estates in excess of the children's needs, it would seem to be consistent with Christian stewardship and the permanent value of laying up treasures in heaven to consider other options.

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Non-conformity is an oft-used term. Robert Nissley offers some basic and helpful insights on this important subject in *Christian Contender*, (3-06).

—Non-conformity is to have a different master and a corresponding loyalty.

—Non-conformity is transformative.

—Non-conformity is a spiritual reality. (Romans 12:2, 1 Peter 2:9)

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Flossie Page lived to be 112 years, eight months and 10 days old. She was the oldest person in our state, sixth oldest in the United States, and 11th oldest in the world. She died on February 23 in Butler County, KS, where she had lived since 1950.

This African-American woman credited her long life to living a good moral life. She daily read her Bible before beginning her work. She washed her clothes by hand. She did not make use of clothes washers or driers.

I find it interesting that her moral lifestyle included abstaining from alcohol and soda drinks. She did enjoy strong coffee.

It is good to remember that, whatever its length, life is a gift from God. Good stewardship includes careful health habits. —DLM



You don't have to be much of a musician to toot your own horn.

The Elusiveness of Humility

Aaron Lapp · Kinzers, PA

George Beiler, my favorite preacher in my youth at Weavertown 50 years ago, said: “When humility speaks of itself, it is gone.” Why is that true? Is it merely a game of, “Now You Have It, Now You Don’t”?

Man’s self-glory, self-exaltation, self-love, and consuming pride are balloon-type vanities expressed man-to-man. Being convicted of such selfish excesses causes some people to make fleshly self-efforts at being humble. Out of that comes a false humility. We may try to dress “humble” to impress others. In my boyhood, one man explained with seriousness that he doesn’t wash his car, because “It helps my humility.”

If you decide you have humility and speak accordingly, it disappears into thin air. Attempting to offset our pride and self-love and vain glory with a man-made humility makes it evolve into a false humility. False humility is actually a form of pride. It becomes a measurement on a social level rather than a heart condition on a spiritual level.

Church standards are for nobler

purposes than for the sake of humility. Submission to one another for an expression of brotherhood is the New Testament ideal. Submission for the objective of keeping covenant is commendable. Humbling ourselves under the mighty hand of God provides for freedom in submission one to another.

Measurable standards are not contrary to the Gospel of Christ. Simplicity of dress with some degree of uniformity has merit, even in a biblical context. Such standards should not be adopted to assure humility, but to glorify God rather than calling undue attention to oneself.

Humility is not a prominent New Testament subject. It is not listed as a fruit of the Spirit, nor as one of the gifts of the Spirit. Where it is found, it turns up as a rare jewel. Its most outstanding characteristic is that humility relates primarily to our relationship with God, not man to man. The primary texts are James and I Peter. James 4:10 says, “Humble yourselves therefore in the sight of the Lord and he shall lift you up.” 1 Peter 5:6 says, “Humble yourselves therefore

under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time.” These two texts are the only passages in the epistles that tell us the how and why of humility. *It is between us and God*, not basically between man and man. Of course, it affects how we relate to people. But when the true value and thrust of humility is realized under God, the effect toward people is *a result rather than a choice*.

If a humble spirit is not cultivated under the mighty hand of God, no effort will make up for it in the sight of man. Humbling ourselves in the sight of the Lord *is the choice*. Humility in relationships *is the result*. That concept is foundational in the study of humility.

Loving people is a choice. Forgiving people is a choice. Helping others is a choice. Being modest is a choice. Exercising patience is a choice. Faith, gentleness, compassion, likemindedness—all are matters of choice. But humility in human relations is largely *the result* of a person who chooses to humble himself under God. No wonder it is so elusive.

The text in James 4:6 says, “God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.” God does not give grace to the stiff-necked and rebellious. God does not give grace to the angry and bitter. God withholds

grace from the complainers and the unthankful. Humility is absent in such persons.

God cuts short the selfish, but gives *grace, space, and a place* for the humble in spirit.

Humility is not putting ourselves down. It is a grace which is exercised when we lift up the name of God. We magnify Him. We exalt God in all His glory and power. We extol the blessed name of Jesus Christ by whom we are saved and in whom we triumph. More of Christ, less of self. Praise to the Father, and praise to the Son by the power of the Holy Spirit, the Holy Trinity—the Heavenly Three in One.

Some start low and end high, like King David, Job, Peter, Paul and even Christ Himself, in His life on earth. Some start high and end low, like King Nebuchadnezzar and King Belshazzar. Some start low, peak high, and end low, like King Saul and King Solomon, Samson, and Judas Iscariot. “The lofty looks of man shall be humbled...” (Is. 2:11). “The eyes of the lofty shall be humbled...” (Is. 5:15). “The haughty shall be humbled...” (Is. 10:33).

Humility has much to do with a person’s effectiveness and usefulness. Few people can handle great wealth or high honor or prestigious power. But Proverbs says the humble can handle

either of them. For it candidly says in Proverbs 22:4, “By humility and the fear of the Lord are riches, and honor, and life.” That sounds like a winner.

Humility does not pout, it does not shout, it does not gad about, nor take any other selfish route. Humility that is real is kind, temperate, and modest. It is pleasant, attractive, graceful, and helpful.

The choice about humility is primarily God-ward. Will I humble myself under the gracious and mighty hand of God?

The result man-ward is submitting

myself in an unselfish manner to the brotherhood in which I have entered into a Christian covenant.

The Bottom Line

Humility is more about how we relate to God than to man. Humility is not so much about putting ourselves down. It really has to do with lifting up God the Father and Jesus Christ, the Son. And fulfilling our responsibilities, and esteeming others higher than ourselves. And all that to the worthiness and glory of God! Amen.



mission awareness

Overcoming the “Strong Man”

Floyd Stoltzfus

The church must not be oblivious to the fact that Satan’s stronghold is real. This fact must not be taken lightly. The devil intends to weaken and destroy the foundations of the church and society. Should the church shrug her shoulders and live in despair or can we claim victory by knowing how to stand against his constant attacks? We may be in danger by thinking too much about the archenemy of God. However, it is scriptural to be “not ignorant of his devices” (2 Cor. 2:11b).

One aspect of Jesus’ ministry for coming into the world is sometimes overlooked: “For this purpose the Son of God was manifested that he might destroy the works of the devil” (1 John 2:8b). At the end of Jesus’ forty-day fast, Satan took Him to a high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. Satan stated that all of it was given to him and that he had the right to delegate these earthly kingdoms to whomever he chose. Did Jesus dispute with him

about this fact? No! Jesus assumed that to be true. Jesus overcame the tempter by resisting him and saying, “Get thee behind me, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve” (Luke 4:8).

Paul, John, and the early Christian church agreed with Jesus on the apocalyptic worldview of their day, which said: “the whole world (around us) is under the power of the evil one,” (1 John 5:19 Amplified New Testament), that Satan is “the god of this world” (2 Corinthians 4:4), and that he is “the prince of the power of the air” (Ephesians 2:2). Three times in John’s Gospel, Jesus refers to Satan as “the prince of this world” (12:31; 14:30; 16:11) The word “archon” translated “prince” denotes “the highest official in a city or a region in the Greco-Roman world.” This evil tyrant has a vast army of demons under him, who are united to destroy the work of God.

When Jesus was accused of casting out devils by Beelzebub, the prince of devils, He made a clear statement: “And if a kingdom be divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand” (Mark 3:24). Here Jesus made a strategic point that in order to retrieve something stolen, the “strong man” must first be bound. This can be done

only “when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted, and divideth the spoils” (Luke 11:22). This is what Jesus came to do. His whole ministry was about overpowering the “strong man,” saving the lost, and building His church. Jesus cast out demons and miraculously delivered men from various bondages, healed the sick, gave sight to the blind, and raised the dead to life.

The decisive victory over Satan has been won through Jesus’ precious blood. The progressive and continual victory over satanic dominion through the cross of Christ is made available to rescue people of all nations (ethnos—people groups) from the power of darkness. However, the final overthrow of Satan is yet future. An elderly saint wrote: “We are now living in the overlap of the ages. The missionary task of the Church is going into all the world and preaching the Gospel. This is the primary reason for this interim period. The Kingdom victory is accomplished in three great acts: 1) In Christ’s first coming, breaking Satan’s power by His life, death, and resurrection. 2) Between His two comings, undoing Satan’s works, continuing His mission with the church among the na-

tions. 3) At Christ's second coming: destroying Satan's kingdom, coming in full glory."

Oh, glory, hallelujah! Listen to the triumphant words: "And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power

of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony..." (Revelation 12:10, 11).



World War I

Guy F. Hershberger (1896-1989)

[Truth, it has been said, is the first casualty in war. Man seems always, somehow, to justify his hateful actions against his fellow man. What will history say about the present strifes going in various places of the world? What will we wish we had stood for in this generation when we give account to God? "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men..." (Galatians 6:10a). The Kingdom of God alone is worthy of our lives—even unto death. —PLM]

World War I began in July, 1914. Germany and Austria were the principal nations on the one side. They were commonly called the Central Powers. England, France, Russia, and Italy were the principal powers on the other side. They were known as the Allies. When the war began,

President Wilson said the United States was neutral and the American people were urged not to do anything favoring either side. Yet, before three years had passed by, Wilson himself asked Congress to declare war against Germany. Congress promptly did so and our country became one of the Allies. The important question is: Why did President Wilson change his mind? And why did the United States declare war against Germany? There were three important causes for this action.

1. German Interference with American Shipping

One of the causes was Germany's interference with American commerce on the seas. The Allies tried to keep the United States from shipping supplies to Germany and Germany tried to keep her from shipping to

the Allies. The Allies planted explosive mines in the waters near the German coast, and the Germans sent submarines to keep the Americans away from the British coast. The United States protested to both sides, but neither yielded. As a result the American merchants suffered some losses, and then some strong feeling developed in America against both sides. England, for example, had seized \$5,500,000 worth of American copper before the close of 1914.

But American feeling against Germany came to be much stronger than that against England. One reason for this was her use of submarines and the sinking of the *Lusitania*. When the Germans torpedoed this great English ship in May, 1915, more than 100 Americans lost their lives. This produced such a wave of resentment in the United States that Germany suspended submarine warfare in 1916. For a whole year no American lives were lost. But in 1917, Germany renewed submarine warfare. Then the United States declared war against Germany. So apparently the cause for America's entrance in the war was the [resumption of] German submarine warfare, its interference with American shipping and its destruction of American lives.

2. Financial Profit for American Business

But this is not sufficient cause to explain the action of the United States. There was a second cause more important than the first. This was the business relations between the United States and England. A nation at war needs millions of dollars worth of war materials. The American manufacturers had the materials and were ready to sell to both Germany and the Allies. But the Allies had such a strong navy that they were able to keep the German ships from coming after the American goods. The German navy, however, could not keep the British ships from coming after American goods, although the submarines did destroy many British ships. As a result, the American business men were soon selling millions of dollars worth of war materials to England every day, and very little to Germany. The Allies' agents came to America and borrowed billions of dollars through the New York banks. Then they purchased materials with this borrowed money and shipped them to England. By September, 1917, more than three billions dollars' worth had been purchased in this way.

Naturally the American business men made huge profits through these

transactions. In 1915, the Bethlehem Steel Company made a contract to sell its entire output to the English government. In less than two years' time this company alone sent over \$300,000,000 worth of merchandise to England. They even manufactured submarines and sent them to England. So we see the United States was not really neutral, as the president had said. America was actually helping the Allies by sending them war materials which Germany could not get. America was sending these materials to the Allies because this paid the Americans in dollars and cents. Furthermore, the Americans loaned money to the Allies so they could buy American goods, and naturally wanted the Allies to win the war, so they could repay the loans. The American business interests, therefore, were helping the Allies from the very beginning of the war and they were anxious that the Allies should win. For if they lost, the American might lose the money they had loaned. So when it began to appear in 1917 that the Allies might be defeated it is not surprising that the United States entered the war to help the Allies—and to save American business interests. The American business interests virtually forced our government to do so.

3. Allied Propaganda

The third cause for America's entrance into the war was Allied propaganda. It is difficult to carry on a war if there is no public opinion in favor of it. So from the very beginning of the war in 1914, great efforts were made to develop public opinion in favor of the Allies. Of course, there were German agents in this country who tried to develop opinion in favor of Germany, but the British agents were more numerous and so had an advantage. Then very early in the war, the British navy cut the telegraph cables connecting the United States and Germany; so from that time on practically all the war news printed in American newspapers came from England. Naturally, it was written in such a way as to create an impression favorable to England. And the American people gradually concluded that the Allies were right and Germany wrong.

Much of the "news" published in those days was little more than vicious lies. The newspapers said that brutal German soldiers cut off the hands of Belgian children playing in the streets. They claimed that the German government used the dead bodies of its fallen soldiers to manufacture fertilizer and ammunition. And pictures were printed

in the newspapers to “prove” it. We know today that these stories were not true. The German army was no more vicious than the Allies’ armies but by means of false propaganda in the newspapers the American people were made to believe that Germany was vicious. This slant on the news was pursued until America was ready to go to war against Germany.

We see then that American business men were making much money by selling goods and lending money to the Allies; naturally they wanted the Allies to win. So when there was danger that Germany might win, they decided to help the Allies and through false propaganda they made the American public willing to enter the war. True, the Germans had destroyed the *Lusitania* with 114 American lives, but the *Lusitania* was a British ship carrying war materials and so, according to the rules of war, Germany had a right to sink it. Furthermore, the American passengers had been warned by Germany not to sail on this, but the American people were not permitted to think of these things. The propagandists painted Germany as [barbarously cruel] and the Allies were made to

appear as innocent victims in need of help—largely because of the selfish motives of American business men selling war materials.

After the United States entered the war, the propaganda grew more vicious than ever. Seventy-five million books and pamphlets were distributed to arouse the war spirit. Hundreds of thousands of speeches were made. Millions of posters were used to promote the cause of hate. And millions of dollars were spent for this purpose until practically all of the American people were swept off their feet. Even preachers of the Gospel used their pulpits to promote the cause of war. One writer said, “This was the greatest fraud ever sold to the public in the name of patriotism and religion.” The fraud was so treacherous that even some nonresistant people were misled. The pressure was so great that some members of the Mennonite Church were tempted to compromise their faith. Happily, however, the church as a whole stood firmly for its principles.

(From *Youth’s Christian Companion*, April 4, 1937. It is used by permission of the writer’s son, Paul Hershberger.)



*It seems that everything we have is taxed—
even our patience.*

The Christian and Social Graces

Howard Torkelson · Farmington, NM

It is Christian to be polite! The Christian of all people should be the most gracious and mannerly.

While proper etiquette or social conventions can vary with culture and background, there are underlying principles which are universally applicable. The graces and common courtesies of the Christian life fit any time, any place, and any people.

Why the concern? Because we represent God. We represent the church—her way of life and her people. We are to attract, not to repel. Some of these graces are slipping away from us. When conservative, separated people become unnecessarily ingrown and bound up in themselves and their culture, they lose interest in others outside their immediate circle and lose their ability to relate. Because of their mannerisms and attitudes that have developed over time they can appear crude, unfeeling, and even obnoxious. Lacking common graces, we may appear boorish to society. An example of this was a disheveled minister who in a rumpled plain suit boarded an airplane for a long flight. His severe case of halitosis also surely

negated any effective witness.

Another example is the case of the mixed group of conservative Menonite youth who visited the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Washington, D.C. Several of the young men began competing as they walked on the chain which hung between posts around the tomb. The guard on duty halted his dignified marching, and sternly rebuked them while the hushed and patriotic crowd exuded disgust.

As a distinctive Christian community, we are commanded to live lives of ordered holiness. Our deportment should commend itself to others. It will have an appeal. We can be poor yet polite, or rich yet rude. Godly virtues are the fruit of the Spirit and are taught by example. Consider the following biblical accounts:

Abigail—Wife of a rich but rude man. She praised the nomad David with this commendation: “evil hath not been found in thee all thy days.”

Naaman’s maid—What commended her to her master in his desperation? Her sweet, innocent, quiet faith. The root of social grace was her faith, early taught and evidently instilled in

her by living example. “Even a child is known by his doings.”

Joseph—He commended himself to the high and lowly alike and was revered for his graciousness and wisdom.

Selfish, undisciplined living brings out the crude and unlovely in human nature. However, if you convert a tramp, he will become a gentleman.

What are some social graces?

Cleanliness. Personal hygiene and neat attire. We can be poor but clean. We might also be rich but slovenly.

Manners. Children should be taught good table manners. They should be reserved in an adult’s presence, and taught to say, “Yes, please” and “No, thank you,” to honor the elderly, and to acknowledge others when spoken to. Children should not be allowed to be present in adult conversation which is inappropriate for children. Children must be taught reverence in the house of God before, during, and after the service.

Respect for the unfortunate, the infirm, church leaders, civil officers, and for the property of others. Children should shake hands when introduced to strangers.

Dignity and modesty of speech. “A fool’s lips enter into contention, and his mouth calleth for strokes” (Proverbs 18:6). The “abundance of

a clean heart” produces words “seasoned with salt.” Adopting modern slang expressions, for example, “He goes” instead of “He said,” is at best poor English.... [How did the term “guy” go from meaning “a cheap fellow” when I was in grade school to referring nowadays to persons of respectability—of both genders? —PLM] There is a...lapse of discipline and dignity in today’s society. The church is not immune to its influence.

We are classed as a subculture by some in today’s world. That should never mean “substandard!” We are to be a peculiar people, but never let that mean unkind, rude, or slovenly.

We are Christians—conservative and plain. Praise God we stand out. Let us stand out for the right reasons. “Let thy work appear unto thy servants, and thy glory unto their children. And let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us...yea, the work of our hands, establish thou it” (Psalm 90:16, 17a).

(From “The Literature Lamplighter,” *Jan-Feb.*, 2006. Reprinted by permission of Lamp and Light Publishers, Farmington, NM 87401)



Ishmael and Beer-lahai-roi

Bonnie Martin · Hicksville, OH

Ten years of waiting. Ten years of earnestly hoping for God's promise of an heir to be fulfilled. Ten years of crushed hopes. Ten years of disappointments.

Every passing year brought more gray hair, deepening wrinkles, and less chance of conceiving a child. Who can blame Sarai for trying to help things a little? Who of us has not been guilty of running ahead of God and taking things into our own hands, when according to our timing, God is late.

I find it interesting that in Genesis 18:14, when the Lord at last reveals to Abraham when the promised son is to be born, He says, "At the appointed time...Sarah shall have a son." And Genesis 21:2 says, "Sarah...bore Abraham a son...at the set time." God was not late! There was a time appointed, and at that set time, God acted. God is never late!

Sarai asked Abram to go in unto her maid, Hagar, that they might obtain children by her. Abram "hearkened unto the voice of Sarai" and took Hagar to be his wife. According to plan, Hagar conceived and the conflict began. Naturally, this slave-turned-wife, who now carried Abram's child, felt smug and despised her mistress.

And, naturally, Sarai, who saw her slave girl experiencing what she had dreamed of for many years, reacted with jealousy.

We can only imagine the tension that entered that home. What sharp words, what burning resentment must have passed between those two women, with poor Abram caught in the middle! Things became more and more unbearable until finally Hagar fled from Sarai's harsh dealings. She must have felt that "It is better to dwell in the wilderness, than with a contentious and an angry woman" (Proverbs 21:19).

Hagar sat down to rest by a fountain and there the Lord found her. The Lord told her to return to Sarai and to "submit thyself under her hands" (Genesis 16:9). Hagar must have thought, How can I ever go back, much less submit to Sarai? But the Lord comforted Hagar with two names: Ishmael and Beer-lahai-roi.

God told her of the son she would bear whom she was to name Ishmael, meaning God hears, "because the Lord hath heard thy affliction" (Genesis 16:11).

After this encounter with the Lord, Hagar called the well Beer-lahai-roi,

which means “a well of the Living One who sees me.” There in the wilderness, Hagar learned two important things: God hears and God sees. What a comfort it must have been to her to know that the Lord heard about her troubles and He had seen the harsh dealings she endured from Sarai. Even though she was only an Egyptian slave girl, the Lord knew what she was going through and sought her out.

As Hagar arose to return to her mistress, I’m sure her burden was a little lighter, just to know that Someone understood and would be with her as she returned to an unpleasant situation. Maybe as she walked along she was whispering “Ishmael. Beer-lahai-roi. God hears. God sees.”

Suddenly, she might have stopped in her tracks. It may have just occurred to her that while the Lord hears and sees her troubles, He also has seen and heard how she had been responding to Sarai! The Lord saw how her attitude towards her mistress had turned from one of humble service to one of haughty superiority. He had heard the angry words she had flung in Sarai’s face. Her cheeks flushed as she realized that, yes, the Lord heard and saw everything! On the one hand she was comforted, and on the other, she was chastened.

We know little of what happened in

the next 13 years of Hagar’s life, but I like to think that she did as the Lord commanded and submitted herself to Sarai. I’m sure that every time she spoke her son’s name, Ishmael, she was reminded that God hears. Maybe at times when the going got rough, she again escaped to Beer-lahai-roi to spend a few minutes with the God who sees.

Ishmael. Beer-lahai-roi. May we, too, be comforted by the reality that God hears our pleas for help, our cries of confession, our groans of grief, our whispers of weariness. He sees our stumblings, our tears, our broken hearts. He is there to pick up and bind up His children.

May we also be challenged by the reality that God sees and hears all that we do or say. He notes our tantrums, not only our tears. He sees our sins, as well as our sorrows; our grudges as well as our griefs. God observes our “secret sins in the light of [His] countenance” (Psalm 90:8). He longs to clean us up as well as bind us up.

With God’s cleansing and comfort upon our lives, we are ready to leave the wilderness of self-pity and “return to Sarai.” We can return to the difficult situations in life and submit ourselves, knowing that nothing can happen but that the Lord hears and sees and is there to help us.



Why Be an Active Church Member?

Howard G. Bean · Tavistock, ON

Statistically, there are six reasons to become an active church member according to Alban Institute.

1. Active church members live an average 5.7 years longer.

2. Active church members have a 60% less chance of a heart attack.

3. Active church members have a 55% less chance of a one-car accident.

4. Teen suicide, the number two killer of teens, is substantially less frequent among teens that attend church weekly.

5. The National Institute of Health has now developed five protective factors that help fight coronary disease. The leading one is weekly church attendance.

6. While only 30% of the highly unchurched say they are very happy, 70% of the highly committed church people say they are very happy.

Spiritually, there are six compelling and much more important reasons:

1. Mutual stimulation to love and good works. Hebrews 10:24-25 says, "And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner

of some is; but exhorting one another..."

2. Full participation in the ordinances and activities of the church. "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers" (Acts 2:41, 42).

3. A sense of belonging. It is such a blessing to be "accepted in the beloved" (Ephesians 1:6)

4. A place to bring seeking and converted souls. The day after the lame man was healed at the Gate Beautiful, he was "standing with them" (Acts 4:14).

5. Care of one's soul. Not only do we encourage holiness by commendation but also by confrontation. Galatians 6: 1 says, "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness." A sense of accountability to each other and to church leaders (Hebrews 13:17) is very important.

6. Makes practical Bible teaching

about submission. Ephesians 5:21 says, “Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.”

Be an active church member. A Christian without a church is like a

bee without a hive or a hockey player without a team.

(From Midwest Mennonite Focus, Nov-Dec, 2005. Used by permission.)



helpers at home

Express Respect for God

Mary June Glick

This is the day the Lord hath made” is true of every day, but especially Sunday, the day set aside to worship God in church.

Our expectations for this day determine our attitudes toward it. Our attitudes, in turn, affect our children’s enthusiasm, especially in the earlier years. Sad to say, as children get older they can be influenced by other factors, such as rejection by peers, lack of parental consistency, and so on. Parents need to listen to their children and allow them to express their concerns and hurts during difficult experiences. As we enhance the child’s understanding and concept of God, he will find a deeper respect for church and fellowship with other believers.

Years ago families attended church only once or twice a week. In more

recent years, Mennonites seem to have become a people of “many nights.” We have become accustomed to using our church buildings for many different activities, even for school. I believe this is good stewardship and provides a sense of “family.” At the same time, maybe we’re losing our respect for the worship service proper. Mothers have a responsibility (fathers, too, but I’m writing to mothers) to prepare the family for a positive worship experience.

Let’s take a look at some ways to make “church” be a joyful and worshipful experience for your family:

1. Preparation

Good things in life take careful planning. This means starting on Saturday. Prepare food, set the table, lay out clothes, and help the children with their Sunday School lessons and verses so Sunday morning in-

volves only the basic getting ready for church. A habit we started when our children were small was having devotions together 30 minutes before we left for church. That meant being dressed and ready to go out the door when devotions were finished, no last minute hustle to find a Bible, or other “emergency.”

2. Arrive at church on time

It is a blessing to you and to others to be sitting in your pew with a few minutes to relax and meditate before the first song. Arriving during the singing can be very distracting to those who are focused on worship. Being on time also teaches your children that church is important. A frazzled, frustrated spirit finds it difficult to relax and rejoice in worship to God.

3. Participation

Teaching our children to participate in Sunday morning services, sharing songbooks and joining in the singing, paying attention to what is being spoken, interacting in positive ways in Sunday School are all valuable tools in learning respect for God and the church. Children can be encouraged at a young age to take sermon notes. Be concerned

about writing notes to others, as well as electronic communication with others during the church service. Perhaps we older people can be an encouragement by leaving our cell phones at home, too.

4. Worship with a toddler

Young mothers sometimes feel like they don’t get anything out of a church service. Remember that this, too, will pass. But there are things you can do to make it easier. Spend time at home trying to keep your child quiet by reading a story or just rocking him for a while. Limit the toys you carry to church. One toy and a book may be better than a whole bag of entertainment. What about going out when he cries? It’s difficult because you don’t want to disrupt. Let Dad take his turn to care for them. Pray with even a small child before church, ask God to quiet his spirit. If we know a mother is having a difficult time in church, we older women have the privilege of breathing a prayer or giving a word of encouragement.

May Sunday be a day of worship and encouragement for your family.



Undying Love—Part Three of Three

Anita Yoder

With all the sweet experiences in Annie Johnson Flint's life, like having Aunt Susie come to befriend them and having the Flints adopt them, Annie had to deal with the bitter fact that she would always live with crippling physical pain.

Pushing her pen in her deformed fingers, Annie began to write and design cards. Her poems were accepted in several Christian publications. In 1919, she published her first collection of poems, entitled, *By the Way, Travelogues of Cheer*. Seven of these brochures were put together, each more attractive and more widely circulated than the one before and gaining in popularity.

However, Annie still struggled to make ends meet as the disease left her with increased physical needs. During this time, she began to require the care of a trained nurse.

One day she had a visitor who was tired and down-hearted. Annie heard all her troubles for, of course, Annie could not run away. In return, Annie answered that discouraged friend with the words that have become a song: "What God Hath Promised." Annie

had lived with discouragement. She had felt and lived the words:

"God hath not promised skies always blue,

Flower-strewn pathways all our lives through.

God hath not promised sun without rain,

Joy without sorrow, peace without pain.

But God hath promised strength for the day,

Rest for the labor, light for the way.

Grace for the trials, help from above, Unfailing sympathy, undying love."

Annie had found that unfailing sympathy from God. When she cried out in the night, God ministered to her with His Spirit. She could write about God's undying love, because of how God literally took care of her needs.

In 1932, after becoming weaker and weaker, her last words were; "I have nothing to say; it is alright." To the end of her life, she was "a vessel unto honor" in God's hands. She did not allow the sufferings she endured to take away her love for God.



Dear Youth,

This month's question addresses the subject mentioned in the February issue. If you have questions or if you have replies for Next Month's Question, please send them to me by April 20. Thank you to each of the writers for your contributions. —EE

This Month's QUESTION

"Many believers (especially younger ones) struggle with knowing whether they are accepted of God. Why do you think this is so?"

r e s p o n s e f r o m o u r r e a d e r s ...

Young believers usually get their view of God by observing the actions, words, and other expressions of their peers, parents, and fellow church members. When other believers respond to them in a critical spirit or in a spirit of partiality, the young person may doubt himself and his ability to be acceptable to others. When this happens, he will tend to think that God does not accept him either. We need to look at what God says in His Word about us and how He made us, rather than getting a view of ourselves that is based on what people think of us.

Sarah Moyer, Paradise, PA

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I had this problem in my early teens. One of my problems was that I did not believe that the blood of Jesus

could save us. I found "believing" to be something hard and mysterious. I think the problem for many young Christians is that they don't know God very closely and therefore it is hard to truly believe and to have faith. "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."

Francis Reimer, Spanish Lookout, Belize

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I think that many believers struggle with this because they have not truly gotten to know the character of God. They need to realize that acceptance of God does not come because of who they are but because of who God is. We need to trust in the way that God has provided through Christ, rather than concentrating on what we need to do in order to be accepted.

Young people are usually more insecure. They don't know yet where their place is in life. Youth is the time when people are most concerned about being accepted by their peers. If their peers don't accept them, they may wonder if God does. A 40 year old has had at least twice as much time to get to know God as has a 20 year old.

Another reason might be that we cannot see God's face. When you look into a person's face you can often tell what they are thinking. But the only way that we can know what God is thinking, is to get to know Him better. We get to know Him by reading His Word.

Youth girl, North Bloomfield, OH

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Our concept of God is often compared with our human relationships. Young people especially draw a comparison of God with their earthly father. I think one of the biggest reasons we may not feel accepted of God is because we are not accepted by other people or think we are not accepted by other people. A second reason why we might struggle is because we do not spend time in God's Word and drink in His promises to us. We need to *believe* that God accepts us and that is not always an easy thing to do—especially if we cannot hear

audible affirmations from God.

Ginni Schlabach, Free Union, VA

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I think that the youth of today are focusing too much on whether they deserve heaven. Perhaps they should focus on living a life of faith and giving their lives to helping others find God and be accepted with Him. It seems to me that the problem and the solution are closely related.

Maynard Reimer, Spanish Lookout, Belize

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For a long time I didn't understand salvation very well. In fact, I am still learning. Salvation is all about a relationship with the Living Christ, not a historical Christ. Many young believers do not realize that God loves them, that He wants them to go to heaven and that Christ is working on their behalf. I think the main reason that people struggle with this is because they have a flawed view of salvation and an incorrect view of who God is.

Luke Nisly, Oswego, KS

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One of the key reasons so many people struggle with this question is that their focus is not on Christ. When we find ourselves trying to figure out whether we are acceptable to God, and trying to make ourselves

acceptable to Him, it is not surprising that we struggle. Of ourselves, we *are* unacceptable to God. It is when we put our trust in something trustworthy—Jesus and His complete work—that we can find rest in the struggle.

Perhaps another reason for the struggle is that many of us have grown up knowing what is right and wrong.

Children are able to understand that they need to be good or there are consequences, but most find it hard to grasp the idea that Christ takes care of our sin before God. Many of us grow into adulthood with an understanding of right and wrong, yet lacking a heart understanding of how Christ justifies us before the Father.

Nancy Yoder, Hutchinson, KS

Next Month's QUESTION

Youth often enjoy being involved in Christian service, but get sidetracked with personal and social interests that are often unfulfilling and self-serving. This distraction keeps them from thinking up creative ways to serve in their communities. What are some creative things that you are doing that has enabled you to serve your communities?



CHRISTIAN YOUTH FELLOWSHIP MEETINGS

JULY 21-23, 2006

District Locations:

North East—Shady Grove Christian Fellowship, *Mifflinburg, PA*

North Central—Antrim Mennonite, *Freeport, OH*

North West—Sharon Bethel A.M. Church, *Kalona, IA*

South West—Shady Lawn Mennonite Church, *Mt. View, AR*

South East—Clearview Mennonite Fellowship, *Montezuma, GA*

THOUGHT GEMS

Life is tough. If a man does something wrong, he gets fined.
If he does something right, he gets taxed.

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Thank God for our freedoms, and remember that a government big enough to give us everything we might want, is also big enough to take away more than we wish to give up.

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In making out your income tax return,
remember it is better to give than to deceive.

• • • • •

It is difficult for the preacher to break a hard heart
and mend a broken one at the same time.

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More Kingdom work would get done,
if men took God's priorities as seriously as they do sports.

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Worldly wisdom benefits a troubled man about
as much as a toothpick benefits a hungry man.

• • • • •

Success that goes to a man's head usually stays for only a short visit.

• • • • •

The loss of one's pride is a small thing
compared to losing one's nobility.

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