



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

Galatians 6:14

APRIL 2015

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Learning from my Matrons

Hannah Nisly, Age 15, Altamont, KS

My grandma saves memories
From events both large and small.
She keeps them in shoe boxes
Where no cleaning—spring or fall,
Disturbs their peaceful dustiness,
They simply rest in peace.
And with each year that passes
Their value will increase,
For each box contains much more
Than the things she packed away—
It holds a family's memories
From many a bygone day.

My mother, on the other hand,
Believes that “less is more.”
Packratishness and too much stuff
Are habits she deplores.
“It’s good to have the things we need,
But what can we do without?
We do not know what lack is like;
We have no right to pout.”
She gladly lives with less herself
So she has more to give,
And tries to love God more than things
Is how she works and lives.

Now I am just a little girl
I really cannot say
Which of the lovely ladies
Does things the better way.
So as time brings me changes
(And hopefully also growth)
I’ll see if I can manage
To be more like them both. 

On listening to Chickens

At 4 o'clock on a recent morning, unusual sounds came from our chicken house with 50 hens and two roosters. These two roosters were not crowing; they were cackling! I was hearing two deep, roosterly cacklings, "bok, bok, bok, bok, buh-GOK!" but no, "Cock-a-doodle-DOO!" I listened for a time and decided to wait instead of investigating right away.

Why were the roosters cackling? A light comes on at 3:30, so at 4 o'clock the hens would be either eating or visiting the nests. Could a predator somehow have gotten into the pen? That would surely cause a disturbance. No, the sounds were too peaceful for that. Nothing I heard indicated fear--just energy.

Then the hens joined in, and their contribution was definitely higher in pitch. The noise level of cackling was getting really loud. Then this din of disorderly high and low cackling was suddenly interrupted by a clear and definite, "Cock-a-doodle-DOO!" And just like that, all cackling stopped! The King of the hill was calling for order. The rooster crowed and paused for only a moment then

he crowed again and again and again!

After his extended recital, a calm peacefulness settled over the chicken house, so I nestled down for more sleep. And the hens? It must have been business as usual for them. Four hours later, the expected number of eggs were in the nests, ready to be collected.

Of Chickens and Men

Is it silly to suggest that what domestic fowl do by instinct, can teach us something about human dynamics and behavior? I hope it's not silly!

We are told that chickens in a flock have a pecking order. Each flock has its own pecking order, with the top chicken taking pecks from no other chicken and the bottom chicken giving pecks to no other chicken. The ones in between can peck those beneath them but not those above them in the social structure. If they do, they're in trouble. According to James 2, people don't need a pecking order. We all have equal worth.

My two roosters grew up together, but the one that's slightly bigger is definitely the dominant one. They don't fight much, if at all, but I can

see which one thinks he's boss. The smaller one sees him that way too. He seems to tiptoe around His Royal Majesty.

When I throw their daily portion of scratch grain into the pen, both roosters come running. They excitedly cluck, announcing that food has been found. This urges the hens to come and eat. The roosters may eat a little but they keep on clucking while the hens come running. The hens make little noise as they get busy to pick up as much grain as possible before it is gone.

Brotherhood Decisions

True brotherhood means that anyone may contribute to the decisions and welfare of the group. This requires that we take time to hear from each other. We realize that when people are freely expressing their opinions in what may seem like a free-for-all, usually very few decisions result.

With people, we don't need a pecking order that makes certain people say nothing because they think people don't want to hear what they have to say. But chickens have a certain kind of order. People need order, too. When the dominant rooster started crowing the other morning, the hens seemed to realize that the need for their cackling had ended. So also, when a group

of people is making a decision, discussion allows anyone to share his or her thoughts. As long as that phase continues, ideas are being tossed about and evaluated, but decision-making waits until order is restored.

Vigorous discussion does not necessarily mean that we have been invaded by a foreign or harmful influence or that we are in danger. Orderliness, however, implies that we allow leaders to lead. When a human leader calls for order it is time for discussion to pause.

Even though roosters crow, effective human leaders are not like that. They see themselves as servants of the people they lead and have no need to boast!

Effective groups provide room for a leader to stand and lead in decision making. While effective leaders should allow discussion, for consistently good decisions, leaders must also have order.

This is where Paul's exhortation to the Corinthians, as he closes his teaching on spiritual gifts, fits, "**Let all things be done decently and in order**" (1 Cor. 14:40).

Does it strain one's imagination to think that Proverb 6:6 could be paraphrased to say, "**Go to the hen, thou chatterbox, consider her ways and be wise**" (Proverbs 6:6).

—PLM 

Re: **Offering Sympathy**, Feb., p. 2.

I am sending this poem in response to your excellent editorial in February.

Grief's Dark Cup

Darlene Miller, Linn, MO

Written with love for all who grieve

If you were never forced to drink the dregs

of grief's dark cup...

No circumstance has put it to your lips
and tipped it up...

Then please don't give to me those empty words,

those platitudes;

Though, since you meant it well, I must express

some gratitude.

My mind is numb; my heart if bruised...
no, crushed...

with newborn grief.

And multitudes of words, though true,
bring scarce relief.

Waste not your breath on words my broken mind

cannot comprehend.

Just hold my hand; weep with me;

and be my friend.

(Author's comments: We have experienced grief and in those times it was easy to see who the comforters were who had experienced grief personally. They usually had the least

to say, but the most comfort to give in the shared tears and hugs. Not that we didn't appreciate the kind words of the others, but they didn't soak into our grief-clouded minds. I thought I would write to share my own experience and maybe it will help someone else to know how to relate to someone who is grieving. Of course, maybe someone has a different opinion on this.)

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I appreciate the editorial, "Offering Sympathy."

David L. Yoder, Kalona, IA

(via phone)

• • • • •

I appreciated you editorial. Your feelings and efforts at sympathizing are very familiar. I have often wondered if my condolences were worthwhile. Do my notes of sympathy and sadness help? Did I share my grief? Can I lift your sorrow? Did a visit at a viewing say how I feel?

I lost my wife 15 months ago and am still going through the grieving process. After a long illness and then the loss I reflect what friends and family shared during my wife's illness and passing.

A long, slow-moving line—looking at it from a mourner's side—may be

what the mourner needs. With some individuals that is so, maybe it helps with the mourning and the healing.

I have noticed that more and more people are not having visitation. I don't know if it is expense or a desire to avoid grief, or the absence of love or care that causes this. I believe skipping this part of the mourning process will only prolong the grief.

I have come to the conclusion that as a believer, I must share in the grief of my friend, my brother in Christ or my family member. I may feel that I have failed in my desire to sympathize, but I leave that in God's hands and let Him use me and my sympathy however He wants to.

I appreciated your suggestions. Again, I say, your thinking is similar to mine.

Ernest Heller, Johnstown, PA

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I just got through reading the Feb., 2015, Calvary messenger. I appreciated the editorial on Offering Sympathy. Yes, just to be there means a lot. It's not always the words that mean the most, but the presence.

Two months after my wife passed away, I was in South Carolina at my wife's aunt's funeral. Bro. Andy Hershberger came to me and said something like this: "Alvin, I did not experience something like this, so so I don't know what it's like." But he shared his sympathy and that meant a lot to me.

I give my encouragement to your brother David L. Miller, for his writing. I also extend my sympathy to him for the recent loss of his wife, Mary.

Alvin D. Byler, Grove City, MN 

We must never seek a false charity that allows us to rest quietly while the purity of the church is plundered, or to become so void of true charity that we contend with bitterness and hate. The Bible teaches us to contend earnestly for the faith, but not bitterly.

- George R. Brunk I

The Power of Creative Minds

Aaron Lapp, Kinzers, PA

Compiler Joe L. Wheeler says in his introduction to *Great Stories Remembered III*, that God created us 100% creative. The average two-year-old is 97-100% creative. The average 18-year-old is a mere 2-3% creative.

Once when Joe Wheeler was reading to a fairly large group of children, some appeared bored and some somewhat interested. But one girl was genuinely fascinated, taking in every word, gesture, and nuance. Her eyes were alight with wonder and pleasure. "Who is that girl?" he asked. He found out that she was the only one in this group without TV.

"Go watch TV," is what many children are told as an antidote to boredom and restlessness. We don't have the tube, thank God, but some modern Beachy parents who have children with similar problems, will say, "Go watch a DVD."

Creativity occurs instantaneously at the eye gate. Creativity is delayed and stilled and reduced in the receiver end, in the mind of the child. TV and DVD are the same to one or a billion minds. It is blasted into the child's

archives, the sub-conscious mind, with a powerful imprint. Once there, it can remain for life, Joe Wheeler says.

I once watched a DVD with some of my grandchildren. It was not a documentary. It was considered by some as harmless, a good lesson about life, clean amusement, soul food, mind feeding. But it left me feeling empty, a waste of time, saddened with people who produce vast libraries of supposedly family-friendly amusement fillers. I wish not to be taken in the next time.

It is not an item for family profit, certainly not qualifying as a worthwhile investment for family nurture. This is true even if the whole family is finally home for one whole evening and can sit down together for once. It fails to involve either the parents' or the children's creativity. This has contributed to the passivity of modern times.

We can slouch to this low level of spectator mode of living in subtly perceptible increments. The development of modern gadgetry has taken an expensive toll. Expensive in

money, expensive in time, expensive in the undeveloped mind and heart throughout childhood. No wonder many young people do not write at all—neither diary, nor journal, nor short story, nor poetry, nor letters to an acquaintance in VS, or even a creative note to leave on Mom’s kitchen sink or on Dad’s desk.

Communication is more and more limited to texting. Folks wait until the phone rings, then they answer, making small talk. Finally the call’s intent is spoken, and struggling with not knowing how to end the conversation without it taking a whole minute. And so, texting replaces the old-time phone conversation dynamics, because it saves time. In what I have seen, texting has little to do with improving our spelling or sentence structure!

Every child needs time to daydream. In a bygone era, Johnny was sent to the far end of the pasture to bring the cows home for the evening milking. He may have started the cows toward the barn. Then he might sit beside the meadow creek. There he sees a butterfly going from one blooming milkweed to another. His thoughts roam. Meanwhile, the cows don’t go home. Do milkweeds produce milk? Butter comes from milk, he remembers. Do butterflies make butter from milkweeds? He has been motionless, deep in thought, beside the creek. There are fish in this

creek! *Could I swim like they do?* He daydreams. *Perhaps, if he tried hard enough.*

His mind is jolted by a familiar, far away call. “Johnny!” He must hurry home. Was he in fantasy land for half an hour or five minutes? He doesn’t know. His nine-year-old mind has no sense of time when he’s in daydreaming mode.

What is the big deal? It has yet to happen—and soon. Dad’s response or reaction will be extremely crucial and important. Dad’s raised voice of reprimand, with threats and condemnation will quickly spoil a God-designed system of personal inquiry in child development. And especially so if Dad says to Johnny that his never-ending questions are really things he can figure out for himself as he gets older, and adds, “If you would first stop and think and take notice, that is how I got to be where I am,” (which in many cases wasn’t very far unless you count two farms or an expanding business).

But a perceptive dad will suspect this was actually one of those times of stopping to think. He can ask, “What were you doing?” The answer might be “Oh, nothing.” You see his daydreaming might be seen as wrong, so he’d better claim no action.

To the question, “Did you stop to look at something?” might be answered with, “Yeah.” “What did you see?” Here Johnny might begin

to explain a little. Just think of the damage if Johnny is told, “Under no circumstances are you ever to do this again.”

But if Dad takes a little time to ask a few questions, compliment Johnny’s boyish curiosity, and add a little information on his own, he will be raising a son for God. God, who made dads, also made sons to grow up and become dads. Dad’s interest and insight is very important here.

A mature and perceptive dad can say, “What did you see?” “Did you have some questions about that?” Or, “Excellent idea, Son. Butterflies make butter from milkweeds, I never thought about that. Let’s check the encyclopedia after chores.” Guess where Johnny goes when he has more questions—to Dad, of course! Give Dad an “A” on this one. This is what Dads are meant to do!

Space does not permit making a case for how homework from school can and has taken away reasonable time for childhood development and creativity. I have never been a proponent for home schooling and remain thus. Our children were born in a span of 21 years. In that time, our Christian schools ramped up homework and at times, I would question the relationship of assignments to a given school subject. It has made our Christian schools Number One; the home, Number Two; and the church,

Number Three. Oh, we deny it, but the fact seems obvious to me. The child ends up with no down time, no time to daydream, to be creative. His mind is so tired. We “rev” them up with no down time, no time to daydream, to be creative. Their minds are so tired. We “rev” up with a DVD, or some other “harmless” spectator entertainment, as a promised reward when their homework is finished. Never mind that it compromises regular bedtime.

Joseph Leinenger Wheeler says in “The Dream Machine” that we should teach “our children that every day is a miniature lifetime—with a beginning, a middle, and an end.” What a powerful metaphor! Lifetime is made of days, one day at a time, but strung together very closely, woven by experience, held together by the remembrance of yesterday and propelled by the vision of tomorrow.

The day’s beginning has the benefit of first impression. First impression has only one chance, one shot. The middle section is the main purpose for the day. For children, there are classes at school, and work at home for Dad and Mom. For the parents, there is work—responsibility, buying and selling, putting a roof on the house, harvesting corn, getting the car repaired, waiting on customers, teaching school, tending the cash register, manufacturing equipment,

driving a truck, cleaning the basement, doing laundry, making meals—the list goes on and on.

How shall we end the day that is suited to an end-of-life ideal? We wish old people to be at rest, have a sense of peace about life, with no complaints. Everything is resolved by either God's amazing grace or His undeserved forgiveness. Old people should have a few words of wisdom, a measure of humor, a smile for everyone, a hope that is transporting. There is a tomorrow that could be better than today. That is how each and every day should end for the adult and the child.

Did you ever notice that the relationship with how a day ends to the general atmosphere of how the next day begins? End with anger—begin with anger. End with bitterness—begin with bitterness. End with peace and rest—begin with peace and rest. End with optimism—begin with optimism.

The idea of every day beginning a miniature lifetime is a powerful model. Think about it some more. How did today begin? Excited or washed out? How is the middle section coming along? Stressful overload or mini steps of progress. How will you end the day? Well, what do you say? Assume personal responsibility and do something about it.


Let's say in the morning you have

hope. In the mid section there is *help*. In the day's close there is a celebration of *Hurrah!* You get an "A" on that one, too.

But suppose someone begins with *pessimism*, middle of the day has *perpetual problems* and the day ends with a *personal pity party!* Each day is representative of a mini-lifetime.

We can do better. We can begin better. We can come through the day better. We can end the day better and better, until it rates as a best.

Sometimes in these articles I scarcely know when I'm finished. My mind carries me along in an unbroken stream of content, coming as fast as I can write. But I will end here, for now. This article has room for a lot of further thought and expansion. We adults have less and less time for reflection and meditation, correction and refinement. Instead of chewing our cud, let's not make spitballs to shoot at people targets.

The Bottom Line is that creative minds of childhood are designed by God to develop with a God-conscious beginning, a middle of life filled with service and sacrifice, learning and teaching, stumbling and rising, receiving and giving, debts and savings, and an ending that avoids remembering one's own futility and other's faults. The sunrise and sunset of each day is a wonderful illustration of a brilliant beginning and a spectacular end! Amen. 

The Call

Johnny Miller, Minerva, OH

(A compilation of true incidents using assumed names.)

Brother James just couldn't sleep. Exhausted though he was from his hard day of construction labor, his mind couldn't rest. All had been peaceful until that phone call! Should he consider it a call from God? Why should he tie himself down to nine months of relentless schedule?

He loved his freedom to visit extended family members and friends in other states. If he accepted the offer, that would be out of the question.

Then, too, there were car payments. He had another year before that obligation would be completed. Maybe *then* he could consider teaching. But the most troubling of all was his budding relationship with Veronica for whom he had been praying. She lived 500 miles away from the school where he was being asked to teach. When would he ever be able to visit her?

James approached God with his dilemma. "Oh, God," he prayed, "I have sensed that You have been leading Veronica and me together

in this relationship. I feel Your blessing upon us. But I have been asked to leave my job and my home to teach school. Is this a call from You, Lord?"


Six months later: As his gaze drifted over the students in his classroom, their heads bent over their work, hard at it, those sleepless nights of torment and days of soul-searching seemed but a vague distant dream. He had come to love these students with their unique personalities. He had also found that in spite of less pay and longer hours than he got in construction, he had been able to meet his obligations. And Veronica? His heart swelled with the thought. How blessed they were in their growing relationship in spite of the miles that separated them!

James' attention was drawn back to the letter lying open before him. The school board was communicating their appreciation for his teaching abilities and dedication. They were asking if he would teach in the coming year and were offering a substantial pay raise. Should he

accept? What about Veronica and marriage? James smiled to himself; he would share this with Veronica. Together, they would seek the Lord.

Epilogue: The school board had come to see the value of paying ample salaries so that teachers could continue teaching. Parents' appreciation for school and student progress had noticeably increased.

James taught for five years and felt his life had been deeply enriched. God had used James' teaching experience to hone his ability to communicate truth to others. He and Veronica were happily married and had been blessed with a darling little girl.

And now the mission board has approached them to serve in a foreign mission. Should they go? 

And This Happened 69 Years Ago

Clayton Weaver, Bastrop, TX

In 1946, at the annual meeting of the German Baptist Brethren, Solomon Stoner was not chosen for the Standing Committee as he had been the previous 11 years. The reason for this was that Solomon was not settled in his position against the radio. However, as time went on, it proved out that he was opposed to the radio, but he was exercising patience to help others change their thinking as well. There were those who felt that just as the telephone and automobile had become useful and acceptable, the radio would safely follow. Others saw the radio as a medium in which the evil far outweighed the good. (*The Country Preacher* by Herman Shuman).

Somehow through the decision-

making times of the mid-40's, the German Baptist Brethren finalized their position against the radio and then later also television. Sixty-nine years later they still stand firm on these issues.

The use of cell phones and internet has, in more recent times, been a matter of concern—and rightly so. It behooves us to keep our hearts “with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life” (Proverbs 4:23).

The German Baptists are presently working with Verizon to develop a program that will enable them to do business electronically without being connected to the internet. While we do not yet know what limitations this program will entail, it does show a responsible effort to be in the world,

but not of it. (John 17:15-16)


Should, however, the internet dilemma give just cause to shift our previous position on the radio and television? Have not 69 years of “progress” given abundant evidence that the proliferation of lust, adultery, immodesty, murder, sports, materialism, and a general disrespect for authority shown how these devices add to those problems? Have they not been shown to be effective in demoralizing the present generation?

God desires to dwell in us and to be our God so that if the world would stand for another 59 or 69 years, we would still be people of faith in Christ Jesus.

Prisons are maxed out and new ones are being built because of the increase of corrupted manners. I recently sat with six inmates discussing moral purity. In our discussion, I commented about the absence of radio and television in my home. This was met with amazement.

One man leaned back in his chair and expressed genuine appreciation for the encouragement he gets out of that. He said it is like putting a knot in the end of his rope to know it can be done. “So how long has it been this way?” one asked. Imagine their amazement to learn that my parents had done the same thing.

Television was created to sell ideas and products. Conformity to the world will surely result if we expose ourselves to it. We will think like the world. The atonement of the blood of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit can transform our minds so that we abide in Him and His Word abides in us.

May we as “strangers and pilgrims abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul” (1 Peter 2:11), and may the generations that come after us, if the Lord tarries for another 59 or 69 years, be the people of God who look “for a city which hath foundations whose builder and maker is God” (Hebrews 11:10). 

Do we really believe in missions? Yes, verily, in carrying the Gospel to all countries that all men may have opportunity of salvation. The church should make great sacrifices to this end.

- George R. Brunk I

“Lovers of Themselves”

(2 Timothy 3:2)

Name withheld


I'm a breath away from darkness,
Where no one wants to go.
I've been there many times before
So scared and all alone.

It's a place so dark and evil that
The sun can never shine.
Where right is wrong and wrong is right
It rips apart your mind.

This dark place has a name
So powerful and strong,
That people have to whisper
At the horror of the wrong.

The name of it is INCEST,
This dark and awful place.
Where Satan reigns and demons live,
And fear is on each face.

I was sent there in my childhood,
By grownups, oh, so wise.
Who never heard me screaming,
And believed his many lies.

It destroyed the very essence
Of what I might have been.
And replaced it all with fear and hate
And love of life—and men. 



marriages

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

Miller-Yoder

Bro. Darryl, son of Thomas and Edith Miller, McConnelsville, OH, and Sis. Mary, daughter of Wayne and Ellen Yoder, Walnut Creek, OH, at Sharon Mennonite Church for Grace Haven Fellowship on Jan. 24, 2015, by LaVerne Yoder.

Yoder-Yoder

Bro. Jacob, son of Lyndon and Martha Yoder, Winchester, OH, and Sis. Eunice, daughter of Wayne and Ellen Yoder, Walnut Creek, OH, at Sharon Mennonite Church for Grace Haven Fellowship on Feb. 14, 2015, by David Yoder.

cradle roll

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

Eichorn, Ryan and Janice (Stoll), Odon, IN, second child and son, Kylan Andrew, Jan. 5, 2015.

Fisher, Leroy and Rebecca (Miller), Mifflin, PA, sixth child, third daughter, Sophia Ann, Dec. 30, 2014.

Graber, Joshua and Allison (Beachy), Russellville, KY, first child and daughter, Kennedy Joy, Feb. 10, 2015.

Correction: Hershberger, Alvin and Verba (Mast), Greensburg, KY, first child and daughter, Gracelynn Ava, born and received for adoption on Nov. 5, 2014.

Hershberger, Mark and Emily (Miller), Walnut Creek, OH, first child and son, Adam Brant, Dec. 15, 2014.

Kauffman, Brian and Verna (Stoltzfus), London, OH, third child, second daughter, Melia Grace, Feb. 16, 2015.

Knepp, Daniel and Carol (Kemp), Loogootee, IN, second child and daughter, Victoria Grace, Nov. 20, 2014.

Martin, Joel and Kelsey (Hobbs), State College, PA, third child, second daughter, Talitha Shalom, Feb. 18, 2015.

Mast, Aaron and Regina (Weaver), Denmark, SC, third child, second son, Austin Luke, Feb. 11, 2015.

Miller, Daniel and Anita (Lapp), Antirrim, OH, fourth child, second daughter, Adalynn Claire, Jan. 31, 2015.

Miller, Floyd and Dorcas (Beachy), New Berlin, PA, first child and daughter, Kyra Jubilee, Jan. 25, 2015. Received for adoption Jan. 27, 2015.

Miller, Mark and Maureen (Beachy), Newcomerstown, OH, fourth child, second daughter, Olivia Jalissa Maureen, May 22, 2014. adopted Dec. 11, 2014.

Miller, Myron and Linda (Shetler), Sugarcreek, OH, fifth child, third son, Troy Jamison, Feb. 18, 2015.

Nisly, Conrad and Judith (Brenneman), Partridge, KS, third child, first daughter, Megan Rachele, Feb. 6, 2015.

Nissley, Gary and Tina (Lengacher), Shippshewana, IN, sixth child, third son, Kainan Rene`, Feb. 20, 2015.

Petersheim, Michael and Melissa (Sommers), Salisbury, PA, second child and son, Friedrich Isaiah, Feb. 24, 2015.

Stoltzfus, Jay Wendell and Kaylene (Bontrager), Millersburg, OH, first child and son, Gideon Scott, Jan. 25, 2015.

Swartzentruber, Rodney and Amy (Weaver), Denmark, SC, second child, first daughter, Kallie Rose, Feb. 11, 2015.

Wagler, Joshua and Hannah (Harlow), Hartville, OH, first child and daughter, Jiana Coleen, Dec. 10, 2014.

Weaver, Dylan and Renae (Stutzman), Blackville, SC, second child and son, Mason Reed, Feb. 11, 2015.

Yoder, David and Wanda (Weaver), Sarasota, FL, fifth child, second son, Patrick Ryan, Sept, 17, 2014.

Yoder, Jadon and Bethanie (Hostetler), Hicksville, OH, fourth child, second daughter, Elliana Grace, Dec. 6, 2014.

Yoder, John and Sharon (Hostetler), Lyndon, KS, first and second children, sons, David Octavio and Kylan Jacob born June 17, 2011. Received by adoption Nov. 22, 2014.

Yoder, Jonathan and Rosette (Miller), Belize, C. A., second child and son, Travis Moacos, Jan. 1, 2015.

Yoder, Joni and Andrea (Eash), Lexington, IN, first child and daughter, Hailey Erin, Feb. 8, 2015.

ordinations

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

Bro. Laban Kropf, 51, St. Margaret, Belize, was ordained as minister at Cayo Christian Fellowship, Feb. 22, 2015. Preordination messages were given by Benuel Stoltzfus, Daniel Stutzman, and Hughdelle Ysaguirre. The charge was given by Orlando Matute, assisted by Virgil Kanagy, and Junior Villafranco. Joaquin Navarro shared in the lot.

Bro. Mervin Lapp, 49, was ordained to the office of bishop at Trauger Menonite Church, Mt. Pleasant, PA, on Jan. 11, 2015, The charge was given by Dave Stoltzfoos, assisted by John U. Lapp and Dave Beiler.

Bro. Tim Miller, 34, called by the voice of the church was ordained as minister for Rosewood fellowship, Shipshewana, IN, on Feb. 8, 2015. Preordination messages were brought by Tim D. Miller, McKenney, VA, The charge was given by Lavern Miller, assisted by Daniel Bontrager and Tim D. Miller.

Bro. Philip Miller, 31, and **Bro. Leland Ulrich**, 40, were ordained in a double ordination as deacons for Osceola Christian Fellowship, Osceola, TX, on January 25, 2015. Preordination messages were given by Dave Kauffman, Lott, TX, Paul Beachy,

Bastrop, TX, Steve Shetler, Perkins, OK, and LaVerne Miller, Partridge, KS in the months preceding the ordination. The charge was given by Dan Miller and Corey Yoder. Ryan Kimberlin and Ernie Weaver were also in the lot.

Bro. Harry Weaver, 42, was ordained as minister for Providence Mennonite Fellowship, Auburn, KY, on Jan. 18, 2015. Preordination messages were brought by Lavern Eash, Dickson, TN. The charge was given by Leroy Kauffman, David Yoder, Jr., and Jonathan Overholt. Marvin Shetler was also in the lot.

o b i t u a r i e s

Fehr, Wilma Viola, 64, of Cross Hill, SC, died Jan. 2, 2015, after battling cancer for several years. She was born at Jerome, Michigan, Aug. 2, 1950, daughter of the late Simon and Ruth Hockady Graber Marner.

She was a member of Cross Hill Mennonite Church.

On May 14, 1970, she was married to Diedrich Fehr. They were married 44 years. Survivors include her husband, Diedrich; sons: John (Elva) Fehr, Wytheville, VA; Diedrich, Jr. (Sharon) Fehr, Delta, CO; Daniel (Angela) Fehr, Cross Hill; Joseph (Dorothy) Fehr, Cross Hill; Jason (Janelle) Fehr, Cross Hill; and 11 grandchildren. Other survivors include 11 brothers: Ray, Paul, Matt, Dale, Abe, Norman, Albert, Tom, Fred, and Eli and six sisters: Mary Catherine,

Sylvia, Darlene, Barbara, Naomi, and Christina.

She was preceded in death by a daughter-in law, Mary; two granddaughters, Lisa and Janelle and a brother, David.

The funeral was held on Jan. 6, at Laurel Hill Baptist Church, Waterloo, SC, and conducted by Tom Wagler, Virgil Kanagy, Andy Coblentz and Ernest Hochstetler, with burial in the Cross Hill Mennonite Church cemetery.

Lantz, Jonathan, 86, died at his home Feb. 6, 2015. He was born in Gordonville, PA, son of the late Amos S. and Anna (Kauffman) Lantz.

Jonathan was a member of West Haven A.M. Church. He was married to Lydia Stoltzfus and their marriage lasted for

63 years. She survives. Also surviving are six children: Elsie M., wife of Daniel Glick; Sally Ann, wife of Abner Riehl; Steven Jay, husband of Cheryl (Blank); Jonathan, Jr., husband of Mary Jane (Stoltzfus); Elam S., husband of Lena (Fisher); Melvin L., husband of Carolyn (Beiler); 42 grandchildren; 54 great grandchildren, and five siblings.

He was preceded in death by two sons, Amos, late husband of Sharon (Stoltzfoos) Lantz Shirk, wife of Carl Shirk, Ivan Lantz, late husband of Cheryl (Blank); one grandson, Daryn Sean Glick; and daughter-in-law, Debra (Grove) Lantz; three siblings, Reuben, Jacob, and Katie Lantz.

The funeral was held on Feb. 8, with Lee Stoltzfus, Ivan Stoltzfus, Ben Stoltzfus, and Samuel Stoltzfus serving. Burial was in the Millwood Mennonite Cemetery, Gap, PA.

Correction: Lapp, Mary (Yoder), whose obituary was published in March. Widower Ben Lapp would appreciate one correction: Lester Glick, Dundee, NY, gave the main sermon at the funeral. I apologize for that deletion; it was my mistake. Editor

Miller, Mary B., 93, of Walnut Creek, Ohio, died Feb. 14, 2015, after a short period of declining health. She was born at Grantsville, MD, July 31, 1919, daughter of the late Clark and Maude Snyder. She was placed in a children's home where she spent the first five years of her life. Then, in 1924, Henry and

Sarah Troyer picked her from a group of young girls to become their daughter. She appreciated her adoptive parents very much.

She was a member of Pleasant View A.M. Church during her marriage to John Overholt and also after moving to Ohio again.

On August 1, 1969, she was married to John Overholt. They were married for 10 years until John died June 19, 1979. On Dec. 18, 1982, she was married to Mose B. Miller, enjoying another 19 years, living in Sarasota, Florida, and being custodian of Sunnyside Church. Mose passed away Dec. 21, 1992. In 2002, she moved to Fredericksburg, Ohio, staying with her nephews and nieces until she entered Walnut Hills Retirement Center in 2009. She made many friends wherever she went. She had a very keen memory and sharp sense of humor.

She is survived by: Stepsons: Leonard (Amanda) Overholt and Walter (Dorothy) Overholt, Step-daughters: Mary (Roman) Wagler and Sadie (Cal) Troyer. Nephews: Ben (Betty) Troyer, Mark (Mary) Troyer, Lloyd Troyer, Luke (Lena) Troyer, and Tom (Janice) Troyer. Nieces: Rachel (Fred) Penner, Edith (Tim) Buck, Kathy (Kevin) Dirks, and Ruth (Martin) Schmidt.

In addition to her parents and two husbands, she was preceded in death by a brother, Andy Troyer, and three stepsons. The funeral was held on Feb. 17, with Homer Zook and Tom Wagler serving. Burial was in the Pleasant View Church cemetery.

Correction: Mary Elizabeth (Beachy) Miller died on January 12, 2015. (See March issue, page 18. Ed.)


Wagler, Albert M., 84, of Stonefort, Illinois, died Feb. 4, 2015. He was born Nov. 29, 1930, son of the late Menno and Verna (Stutzman) Wagler.

He was a member of Carrier Mills Amish Mennonite Church .

On Dec. 4, 1952 he was married to Katie N. Schrock. She preceded him in death on Dec. 7, 2008. Surviving are three sons: Menno and wife Barbara (Byler), Cottage Grove, TN; Daniel and wife Viola (Beachy), Stonefort, IL; Stephen and wife Nioma (Yoder), Kenton, TN;

two daughters: Naomi and husband Calvin Yoder, Moulton, AL; Susan and husband Louis Kauffman, Cottage Grove, TN; one foster son, Eugene Reynolds and wife Barbara of Jenings, FL; one brother Leroy, Hartville, OH; two sisters, Ada Schlabach, Sarasota, FL; Miriam, Uniontown, OH; 40 grandchildren and 13 great grandchildren.

He was preceded in death by one daughter, Miriam, three brothers and one sister.

The funeral was held on Feb. 8, 2015, at the Cedar Bluff Social Brethren Camp for Carrier Mills A.M. Church, with Milton Yoder and Samuel Yoder serving. Burial was in the Carrier Mills A.M. Cemetery. 

observations

In 1953, Mennonite bishop, John L. Stauffer wrote: “The radio puts strange religious voices and ideas into our homes and provides fun and foolishness for our children.” (From a reprint in *The Sword and Trumpet*, March, 2015.)

The report of the Bishop Committee at Penn Valley (11-4-15) is an interesting read. There seems to have been an atmosphere of freedom that was favorable to hearing significant range of open discussion. A question that does not come up in the report: “Does congregational autonomy give ethical freedom for congregations to disregard constituent conscience?”

When the question of radio was voted on at a Beachy ministers’ meeting in 1999, there was a 80% support to consider radio non-use as a standard for Beachy congregations. This was not action of an executive committee, or our Bishop Committee, but as representative body of leaders of the constituency.

A common question is: “Why make an issue of radio use when we can access almost anything with internet and cell phones?” Another question: “How would radio help us be better protected from the harmful effects of other modern media?” Are there spiritual needs in our churches that

could be helped by “strange religious voices and fun and foolishness for the children?”

Is there not a troublesome similarity between the individual who disregards church standards and the congregation that is insensitive to constituent conscience?

History seems to remind us that if we as Amish Mennonites are able to minimize radio use as a non-issue, it will have far-reaching and long-term effects on other concerns of practical non-conformity and biblical authority.

If we idealize that contemporary culture should define our lifestyle, our decision-making becomes unimportant. Things will move in that direction unattended. But obedience and faithfulness require courageous and diligent pastoral leadership. If the above lines seem erroneous or misguided, feel free to contact me at 620-567-2376.



In some ways identity seems very important in our circles. If a singing group on tour visits their attire is intentionally uniform. Weddings seem to call for new dresses for this very special occasion. For these events uniformity becomes very important.

For the church to require this level of uniformity would seem unreasonable, but identity is an important matter. To be identified with God’s people was important for

Moses. It still is. To be intentionally identified with the world instead of the church betrays a serious case of misguided loyalties. A wrong identity and wrong loyalties do not have good outcomes.

Most of our churches do not have very strict requirements for the brethren. This need not and should not become an occasion for insensitivity and poor judgment in appearance. I recently received a catalog from Sharon Mennonite Bible Institute. In addition to a rich menu of learning opportunities, they also offer guidelines for living outside of the classroom. This includes a section on General Conduct and Personal Appearance: “Outward appearance tells much about a person. Attire and conduct reveal our character. Therefore a student’s appearance shall be neat, clean, modest, simple and appropriate. In response to the commands of the Bible to be free from conformity to an ungodly world...we believe the plain coat and cape dress are a practical approach to the problem of constantly changing and sensual patterns of personal appearance.”

“Brethren are to keep their hair neat and well trimmed...Beards shall be consistent with home church standards.” Space does not allow the quotations of many more requirements of practical non-conformity and visual expressions

of obedience to some clear teaching of discipline, but the school is to be commended for their effort to promote concepts and practices that are clearly taught in the Bible. Things needed in Bible schools are also needed in the churches.



Some time ago, Eli Mast made a trip to Germany to receive treatment for prostate cancer. He feels very positive about the experience. The treatment appears to have been successful. There was no discomfort nor were there side effects. Financial costs were relatively reasonable.

Hitherto I have seldom mentioned the subject of health care in this column, knowing that to do so could be controversial. But Bro. Eli feels that more people would want to know. He gave permission that people could contact him for further information. Eli Mast, P.O. Box 142, Walnut Creek, Ohio 44687. Phone: 330-893-2873 or 330-231-7112.



Mennonite owners of Conestoga Wood Specialties has settled with the Obama administration for \$570,000 in legal fees in the high-profile Supreme Court case. *World* magazine calls it compensation. (2-21-15)

-DLM



God’s judgment on and attitude toward sin has been soft-pedaled among people who name the name of

Christ. It’s good for us to remember that God takes sin very seriously. After all, He has provided us the freedom and power to live as we ought. We need to be clear in the attitudes we espouse and convey that sin is serious and the remedy is abundant and effective.

However, an unbalanced emphasis can be more damaging than beneficial to the cause of Christ. Westboro Baptist Church (Topeka, KS) is well-known for clearly articulating their understanding of God’s hatred, not only of sin, but also sinners. They currently say they have engaged 54,544 pickets. They claim to represent God’s perspective and to be Christians. The signs they hold at these events make me cringe to be identified with them. Some examples are: “God Hates Fags” and “Thank God for 4 More Dead Troops.” In early February, the 61-year-old wife of Kansas Representative Dennis Hedke died in an accident in a grocery store parking lot. The Westboro Baptist church referred to her death in this way, “Then an oath-breaking legislator made God so angry that He killed the guy’s wife!”

Sometimes when disagreements arise we are tempted to adopt a stance that is very extreme. We might explain that we are trying to balance out someone else’s problem. Let us be reminded by Westboro Church that we don’t usually become balanced by

pursuing an extreme. In considering God's attitude toward sin, let us be up front about the seriousness and eternal consequences of sin, but let us never get far away from God's loving and effective remedy for the sin that would separate us now and forever from Him.

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Deer season is over for this winter. This corner of Kansas (SE) is renowned for its trophy whitetail population. This winter the local hunters were abuzz with the news that our neighbor got a buck with a rack that he thought might challenge the state record for a bow with a score of over 200. This area also boasts good turkey and migratory waterfowl hunting. In our neighboring county, Claythorne Lodge attracts thousands of people every year from all over the USA for hunting and shooting competitions.

The hunting reputation of this region has bolstered real estate values which exerts a ripple effect on the local economy. While I don't hunt, deer are so numerous that I am happy to see them harvested and eaten by hunters, so it reduces the numbers of our "bumper" harvest. Deer represent a real and persistent danger for motorists. People in our little church have had at least five deer accidents in the 12 years of our living here. Thankfully, no one was hurt.

I suppose most of us agree that hobbies have value. Since hunting is

enjoyed by many of our people, I'd like to invite us to consider whether this hobby or pursuit is worthy of the resources we assign to it. As with many things, moderation is defensible, but extravagance is not. Here are a few suggestions that might indicate where we fall on this continuum:

- Do my efforts put meat on my family's table?
- Would I be interested in hunting if nobody else ever found out about my success?
- Does the monetary cost of the hunt, time off work, food and fuel and lodging for travel, ammunition and guns, trail cameras, clothes, etc., bring a good return?

We also need to add to financial cost other intangibles: time spent in scouting, being away from family, the risk of injury and death associated with the use of firearms, etc. Of course, there are benefits. Does the benefit of the meat, the connection with God through His creation, the relationships built and the personal rejuvenation give us a good return on energies and resources expended? Maybe the question that is most uncomfortable is likewise the one that needs answering the most, "Are the funds and energies expended in 'the hunt' the kind of Kingdom investment that honors Christ and blesses our brotherhoods?"

-RJM 

A Tale of Three Churches

Current Evaluation

Frank Reed, PA

I am a committed Anabaptist. Much of my life has been invested in study and in instruction in Anabaptist circles. My conviction is that we (Anabaptists) have what the world needs. God has entrusted His Word to us and He has given us courageous leaders from the past for direction. Many principles from the early Anabaptist movement are still providing leadership today.

There is always a challenge to being an Anabaptist. Everyone views and reads the Bible through some kind of filter. The filter is the most important part of being a believer. The filter(s) in people's lives control what they see and understand from the Bible. It is my conviction that the Anabaptist "filter" is the most useful and least obtrusive of all possible filters.

That said, any belief system can become an ideology and begin to control the level of truth (or lack thereof) in the system. That danger exists in the Anabaptist world also. In fact, it is a major problem. Only by overcoming the ideologies that develop in the system can we begin to hear from the Holy Spirit and have our hearts illuminated by the Scriptures.

After years of studying and teaching Bible and Anabaptist history, here are some observations:

Need for introspection. Most groups prefer defense posturing to genuine evaluation. They do not like to hear how things could be improved. They are involved in status quo maintenance. They have their impressive leaders who set the course and the others follow. Self-evaluation needs to replace self-congratulation.

Need to hear from the prophets. God sends prophets to all groups. They are there and they have something to say. Listen to them. They are the ones who are not impressed or influenced by politics. They are the ones who will tell the truth, no matter what.

Need for knowledge of history— church history and our own history. Who reads Menno Simons or Alexander Mack? We read modern evangelicals, but not our own historic writers. We depend on the internet, but not on the integrity of history.

Need to understand ordination. The definition of ordination is to be called and to be given a charge. Ordination does not convey inordinate power. Historically,

ordination was a call to a life of serving and shepherding.

Need to eliminate power struggles. They are so destructive. They only serve the purpose of the people involved. The members suffer as a result of the struggles for power among leaders. Find ways to stop fighting and find places to serve and build. We do not all have to live and work in the same location.

Need for youth. Youth are the answer. They are the “new conservatives.” They have to face life with different skills than we did. They are doing so—doing better than we did. In a day of aging leadership in our churches, youth are the answer. Trust them. They will be here long after we are gone. Prepare them for their leadership roles.

Need to learn to work together. Para-church groups are growing. They may be the answer to some of the struggles. Similarly minded groups can work together even if they are not part of one congregation or conference.

Need for Bible teaching. This is the greatest need. Jesus saw the people as sheep without a shepherd and He taught them many things. Our people need solid teaching. For the most part, that is not happening. Most of the teaching they do get is from evangelicalism on the radio and from books. We must prepare leaders to know how to teach the

Word of God. They must be prepared and able to make the Bible come alive for the people.

Need for sustainable leadership. Godly men who are spiritually and emotionally healthy are desperately needed in our churches. Men with vision and discernment and wisdom and led by the Holy Spirit of God.

Need to value intentional instruction.

- In the home—healthy homes that raise healthy children

- In the church—healthy churches that support healthy families

- In the schools—healthy staff who impart health to students

- Need for people to be committed Anabaptists and not just plain-dressing Protestants

- Need for depth in academic rigor—the earliest Anabaptists were scholars

- Need for apologetics—to know and defend what we believe

Can these needs be met? They can and in some places they are. The continued existence of the Biblical witness of our communities is dependent on our commitment to the Word of God in each life.

God bless you and you make and keep and teach that commitment.

[Originally appeared on Biblical Brethren Fellowship, Dec. 15, 2014. Used by permission. Submitted for publication by Reuben J. Kaufman, Sugarcreek, OH.]



Ministers' Meeting Messages – 2014

Here is a condensation of the sixth message given at the annual ministers' meetings, held on April 8-10, 2014, at Journey Mennonite Church, Yoder, KS. These meetings were hosted by the three Amish Mennonite churches of Reno County, Kansas. Sets of 10 CD's are available from Victory Music Services, P.O. Box 1498, North Highlands, CA, 95660, for \$50, postpaid. Telephone: 443-480-1489. Email: victorymusicservices@gmail.com.

The Cost of Leadership

Ray Yoder

Cedar Creek, TX

Peter said, "Feed the flock of God." Jesus had instructed Peter to do that too. Peter passes it along by saying to them that they should shepherd the flock of God. Shepherding includes more than just feeding. It means to care for more than the need for nourishment. We are called to be shepherd leaders. At your ordination, you were asked this question: "Are you willing to accept this service and by the grace of God and the aid of His Holy Spirit to give up yourself to the work of the Lord as a faithful minister of the Word in his church?" When we face that question at ordination, we may not realize what all it could mean but later on it begins to sink in.

Sometimes the cost of leadership is alluded to in the pre-ordination services, but mostly we dwell on the qualifications of the office. As we are confronted with the cost of our calling, it can be discouraging, if we were not forewarned. Wouldn't it be nice if the call to the ministry would allow us to remain in our comfort zone and all of our members would appreciate our work? This work does not allow us to always stay in our comfort zone and the sheep will not always appreciate our efforts to lead them to green pastures.

Sometimes in late summer, when the pastures in the valley are dried up, we must take them to alpine meadows, where the terrain is more rugged, and the air is cooler, but the pastures are greener. The older rams and ewes tend to be reluctant to make that trek up the mountain.

They've been there before and they know some of the difficulties. They don't like the rough terrain and the steep path. They're being moved out of their comfort zone.

Before the shepherd takes his sheep up to the steeper mountain pastures, he will go and check out the situation. He will check for poisonous weeds. He will check out the best path for his sheep. He notes the places of clear water. After that, he calls his sheep to follow him.

Sometimes when the older sheep are too reluctant to follow, the shepherd will pick up a lamb and start walking. When that ewe follows to be close to her lamb, the rest of the flock following become more willing to follow the shepherd.

A shepherd gets tired, but his foremost thought is the well-being of the sheep. He dare not become complacent. He needs to be constantly aware of his surroundings. He needs to be on the lookout for enemies of the sheep.

He also needs to be aware of the sheep's need for shelter. Storms will arise. At times he will need to go out into the storm to help bring stragglers to safety.

He needs to be a man of courage. When danger arises, he needs to place himself between the danger

and his flock. He will not run but will confront the enemy with his rod.

He needs to watch that his sheep do not drink from stagnant pools of water, where they pick up diseases that cause them to be weak and sickly.

He will lead his sheep out in the early hours of the morning, where they may feed on the dew-laden grasses where they may quench their thirst as they graze.

At times, a sheep wanders and gets lost. Or it may roll onto its back and because of a heavy wool coat, be unable to get back on its feet. It may be on its back struggling in vain to get up and go. When the shepherd realizes that one of his sheep is missing, he goes and searches until he finds it and brings it back to safety. When he finds the missing sheep in trouble, he doesn't sit there and scold it with, "You knew better than that!" He picks it up and carries it back, if need be, to the fold.

Sometimes a sheep insists on wandering away from the flock and the green pastures the shepherd has led them to. Other sheep may follow them as well. When the shepherd sees that a certain sheep is causing problems, he may need to get rid of that sheep. He doesn't do it because

he wants to do it, but for the well-being of the rest of the flock, he must do it.

In the lambing season, the shepherd needs to be out in the cold in all hours of the night and helping his flock in this difficult time. At times the shepherd is utterly weary, but when there's a need in the flock, he will go out again, because the shepherd's on call.

The shepherd spends so much time with his sheep, that he even smells like them.

Brethren, you have been called to shepherd and it will cost you something! Jesus the Great Shepherd, from Whom we get our cues, taught us by personal example that the cost of being a shepherd is great.

His personal needs came second to the will of His Father. His priority is to minister to the weak ones of the flock. He rebuked the rams for their headstrong ways but He was compassionate with the lambs. His way of shepherding included spending all night sometimes in speaking with His Father.

He was criticized, misunderstood, slandered by those who pretended to be shepherds. In the garden He faced the responsibility of my sin. Then He made the ultimate sacrifice. He gave His life for His sheep. He told

His disciples that they should not expect any different treatment than He was given.

The Apostle Paul was vindicating his apostleship in 2 Corinthians 11. He did not point to the successes of his ministry. He did not mention how many missionary journeys he had made or how many letters he had written to the churches or how many converts he had won to the kingdom or how many churches he had started. What he talked about was what following Christ had cost him personally. In Galatians 6:17, he said that he bears in his body the marks of the Lord Jesus. We should not think it unusual or unfair that we face difficulties in shepherding, because that is the life of a shepherd.

Self-sacrifice is part of the price that must be paid daily. A cross stands in the way of spiritual leadership. The shepherd must give his consent to be impaled upon that cross. In 1 John 3:16b it says, "...he laid down his life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." At the cross we lose many personal rights: privacy and the ownership of our time. At the cross, you give up your reputation, your desire for status and appreciation, your comfort zone, and your dreams. You now take up the will of another. Your

time is directed by another. Your effectiveness is directly proportional to your willingness to lay down your life. When Christ called men away from their vocations, He was making it clear that our plans and desires become secondary to the call of the Kingdom.

Even though Paul did not favor having Gentile converts be circumcised, he encouraged Timothy to do so, to better minister to the Jews. Shepherding will lead us into conflict with the enemy.

Shepherding also exacts a cost to our families. Travel, meetings, and problems in the membership tend to bring stress on our families. The leader must be careful with his attitude and protect his family from pain. When our children begin to resent the church, we have a problem.

A third area of problem is fatigue. Most of us are bi-vocational. We work in occupations other than pastoring. We provide a living for our families. We do most of our pastoral work on weekends or evenings, so we get tired. I believe it is safe to say that a lot of essential work is done by those who are tired. Christ, when He was wearied with the journey, ministered to the woman at the well. Paul spoke about

weariness in 2 Cor. 4:16b, with these words, "...but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day." We need daily renewal.

Because of the work of shepherding, we need rest. We live with a tension that is probably never completely resolved. We must never become complacent. We must always be watchful. We must keep our eyes and ears attuned to the silent messages that come from our people.

Another cost is loneliness. By its nature, the lot of the leader tends to be a lonely one. He must always be ahead of his followers. While he may be the friendliest of men, there are aspects of loneliness he must face. The Lord often gives a heavy burden to the shepherd leader that the people do not see nor hear. One area of loneliness is holding confidences.

As a leader you pay the price of being a lightning rod. An example of that is given in 1 Samuel 30. It's the account of David and his men coming back home and finding that their valuables are stolen, their families are kidnapped and their houses are destroyed. David's men, in their grief, looked for someone to blame. They weren't objective and started blaming their leader. When

things are “headed south,” the leader treads a lonely path. In the presence of our Heavenly Father we get a fresh perspective.

Nothing so kills the efficiency, the capability, and the initiative of a leader as does criticism. It can chip away at his self-respect and undermine his confidence to lead well. If he handles it well, it reveals humility. Leaders must be able to endure and to benefit from criticism. Criticism should bring us to our knees. If we have searched our hearts and been honest with God we do not need to feel pressure to change the opinion of others. In Galatians 1:10, we have Paul’s words of how he responded to criticism. He was fearless of man’s judgment because he knew he stood before a higher judge.

Matthew 13:57 says, “They were offended in him. But Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honor save in his own country, and in his own house.” Often people do not appreciate a leader until he’s gone. Sometimes they make a monument to him with the stones they threw at him in life. This is especially true of prophetic leaders. Such leaders strike the consciences of those around them. They may give warnings because they look

into the future with greater insight. All leaders watch for souls for whom they must give account. Sometimes they must make unpopular decisions. If, however, rejection comes because of authoritarianism or self-will, we have failed.

Time is another thing that is a challenge to manage. Kingdom causes come first. Effective shepherding takes time.


When difficulties arise, we are asked to prevail and to keep on. In Galatians 4:19, we see a weight so heavy that it compares to childbirth, one of life’s greatest challenges. We groan in our spirits and cry out to God with tears and fasting until Christ is formed in His body, the church.

I wonder how many of us are guilty of DUI. (Operating under the influence of *materialism*, of *distraction*, or in *failing to face cultural issues*). We must not major on minors or become unbalanced in our thinking. When we are filled with the Spirit of God, we will have clear vision and unclouded thinking.

Many things can make us fearful like Peter who feared a slave girl who had no way of being a real threat to him. We must become men and women of faith who actually believe what we say we believe. He

is building His kingdom and we are a part of that. Our eternal security is in Him, not in the world of comfort.

After Pentecost, the Holy-Spirit filled disciples were men of boldness. The key element in overcoming fear is being filled with the Holy Spirit. We must also resist the temptation of building walls between us and the world. We live in a Christian culture that has become more and more defensive over the years. This world is a horrible place with all the evil out there. Our response

is to be a wall between us and the world. Is there anything in the life and teaching of Jesus Christ that encourages that? Jesus said in John 17 that His children are in but not of the world. He also prayed not that God would take them out of the world, but that God would keep them from the evil one. Our engagement with the world must be Spirit-led. We must keep our eyes wide open. This is ultimately about God-given courage and fullness with the Holy Spirit. 

mission awareness

A Day at the Haynes Street Mission

Floyd Stoltzfus, Belize City, Belize

Brother Greg Ysaguirre called me on this Monday, February 16, 2015, at 6:15 AM. He spoke with a hoarse throat because he's fighting a bad cold. He is one of the teachers at the Owen Lisarraga Public High school of 500 students. Bro. Greg (a minister at Pilgrim Mennonite Church at Hattieville) wondered if I could have a fifteen-minute devotional for the school this morning. He gave me an assignment

to speak on the subject of "Sowing and Reaping," based on Galatians 6:7, 8. I answered, "Yes, I am willing to do that."

I was glad for some notes I brought along from Pennsylvania on this topic. I arrived at the school in plenty of time to talk with some of the teachers and employees of this government school. You see, as you visit with Belizeans, there is often a warm and friendly interchange

and we say, “We be (are) no more strangers.”

The students are all neatly dressed in uniforms—rustic-red pants and white shirts for the boys and rustic-red skirts and white blouses for the girls and everyone with black shoes and white socks. They file onto the basketball court under a tent to sing, quote the Lord’s Prayer, listen to the white Mennonite pastor from the city, and get a sound, ten-minute lecture from the principal on being respectful and applying themselves to their studies.

We have handed out many Scripture booklets from World Missionary Press. Where will these young people be in ten years from now? The experience this morning gave me new insight into school life in Belize. Yes, you heard it right. A person is able to preach against sin, expound on the new birth and talk about the plan of salvation through Jesus Christ in a public school in Belize.

Every Monday noon, we as a unit and some native church members meet in the mission church across the street to fast and pray. Several dedicated Christians scheduled numerous churches across the city to fill in a slot and pray for an hour throughout this past October. In that way a group was praying during all the daylight hours. The crime and

violence in Belize was extremely high from January to September, 2014. But it seemed that when Christians were praying, the crime rate and killings in Belize City came down. However, after Christmas there were more murders again. We decided at Haynes Street to continue this schedule. It has been such a blessing!

A day at Haynes Street Mission is just plain work: cooking, washing, ironing, cleaning, changing oil in one of the vehicles or installing new shock absorbers in one vehicle.

Sometimes MZL (Mt. Zion Literature) book customers come around and purchase new books or Bibles. We enjoy having these people come. Tim Petersheim tightened down the new metal roofing on our veranda. Later, he went out to Hattieville to install doors in a new house for one of the brethren there. Leona Yoder was preparing for her visiting relatives of six and went to the airport to meet them and bring them to the mission. They will help us paint the mission house and do some touring in this beautiful land—Belize!

A neighbor girl came for the usual thing--a cup of cold water. She might come to our door three or four times during the warmer days of the year. Marilyn visited a sister of the church who cannot read and


has Bible reading and prayer with her. This mother's youngest son goes to school but he cannot read very well. Marilyn sat down with him for an hour on our veranda to teach him to read better. A neighbor lady came onto our property hollering and chasing after her slightly-retarded son with a stick to club the anger out of him. We enjoy sitting down with this boy and reading the Bible with him and praying. Our prayer is that he would become repentant, turn his life around and become a dynamic witness for Jesus.

A girl comes to the gate with several bruises that need attention with salve and band-aids. Another comes from across the street to use a volume of our World Book Encyclopedia. She sits on the veranda to read about a certain disease and make a special report on it for school. A sharp eight-year-old boy sits with Marilyn on the veranda and tells her all about the shootings that happened yesterday along a street about a mile from the mission. He seems to remember all the facts and has an expression in his voice that demands the attention of the listener. He wants to be a policeman some day. We are praying that he would surrender

his life to Jesus Christ and become a dynamic preacher of the Gospel! This little fellow gladly takes a broom and vigorously helps me sweep off the stones from the concrete pad outside our gate, then he takes a rake to level the stones in our mission's parking lot.

As we work together, I have opportunity to share with him about the wonderful plan of salvation and biblical facts of heaven and hell. After dark, two next-door neighbor boys came with their plastic jugs to have them filled with rain (drinking) water from our vat. Later in the evening I went to visit with one of our young brothers in the church to encourage him in his Christian life. He is very a sensitive and decent young man. I sat and listened to him pour out his hurts and painful experiences. You see, when you take time kindly and patiently to listen to people, it builds relationships, ensures confidences, and cements lasting friendships.

This is just a little window of insignificant labor in a day at the Haynes Street Mission. Pray for us and the national church! As missionaries we often feel as the song writer, Elizabeth Akers, so aptly expressed it:

“The time for toil is past, and night has come.
 The last and saddest of the harvest eves;
 Worn out with labor, long and wearisome,
 Drooping and faint, the reapers hasten home,
 Each laden with sheaves.
 “Few, light, and worthless—yet their trifling weight,
 Through all my frame a weary aching leaves;
 For long I struggled with my hapless fate,
 And staid and toiled till it was dark and late,
 Yet these are all my sheaves.
 “So do I gather hope and strength anew;
 For well I know Thy patient love perceives;
 Not what I did, but what I strove to do.
 And though the full ripe ears be sadly few,
 Thou wilt accept my sheaves.” 

helpers at home

Friendship Tips from Proverbs

Mary June Glick, Seneca, SC

We all need friends. However, women may tend to have a deeper need of *camaraderie*, which seems to include a mutual friendship, support or companionship. If you have ever read the classic book, *Anne of Green Gables* (which you should read if you have not; you may even want to read it to your daughter or granddaughter), you will remember the deep desire of Anne, the little orphan girl who desperately wanted a *bosom* friend. I believe this is the yearning of every little girl and perhaps every grown woman. Unfortunately, this longing within us may cause us to become

possessive in our friendships or exclude others from becoming part of the friendship.

Little girls seem to experience much more drama in their relationships than do boys. Many women have experienced deep wounds and heartaches from childhood or teenage friendships. The sad fact is that relationships often bring disappointment.

God created us to be relational beings. He created us to enjoy fellowship with Him. He also created us for fellowship with each other; we need each other.

Jesus commands us to love each

other. No man or woman is an island. We all find our deepest needs met in Christ, however, we also find fulfillment in sharing our hopes and dreams, disappointments and struggles with a friend.

Notice how the book of Proverbs gives us good advice and encouragement on friendship:

Be a friend. Proverbs 18:24 “*A man (or woman) that has friends must show himself friendly.*”

A true friend is friendly, not snobbish, or two-faced, insincere, given to backstabbing, but cheerful, optimistic and happy. She adds to your desire to be a better person.

A true friend is trustworthy. Proverbs 18:8 “*The words of a talebearer are as wounds and they go down to the innermost parts of the belly.*” Godly women will build each other up emotionally, spiritually, and physically. They will cry, laugh, and pray together. Friendship is a treasure. It will not be taken carelessly. Friends will confide in each other. They will speak the truth in love. They will be kind and encouraging. They will not slander others in their conversations, but will seek to build up and encourage. Christian friends trust completely.

Friends love unconditionally. Proverbs 17:17 “*A friend loveth at all times and a brother is born for adversity.*” Unconditional friendship accepts the other person’s weakness

and imperfections. No one is perfect and if we are honest we all make mistakes at times. Friends are quick to forgive; will not harbor bitterness or be easily offended. Friends will be there for each other during sickness or trials. They will also rejoice when their friend experiences joy and happiness. Christian friends edify each other. They will “push the person up the ladder ahead of them.”

Friends bring joy and encouragement. Proverbs 17:22 “*A merry heart doeth good like a medicine.*” Contrast this with Proverbs 27:15 “*A continual dripping on a very rainy day and a contentious woman are alike.*” Which woman do I want to be? A woman that brings cheer and happiness or a woman who is argumentative and disagreeable? This could also include complaining or having a negative attitude. I think we all appreciate friends who cheer us on in life’s journey. May God help us to be a friend like this.

A friend speaks kind words. Proverbs 16:26 “*Pleasant words are as an honeycomb, sweet to the soul and health to the bones.*” Did you know that words can bring health? Friends give encouragement by their words. They speak words of life—words that lift your spirit.

A friend is one who loves you and accepts you just as you are. However, she also makes you want to be a better person.



Four Short Stories from Africa

Mary Ellen Beachy, Kisumu, Kenya

A Widow's Prayers

Is there anything worthwhile that a widow can do for the Lord?

It was Wednesday morning. Pastor Eric was discouraged. He opened his Bible to study the lesson for the afternoon Bible Study. Then he closed it. Satan whispered in his ear. *Don't go. Do not study. The Christian life is hard. Just give up the fight.*

Later that morning Pastor Eric felt the Spirit of God stir his heart. *Why be discouraged when God is with you?* He opened his Bible and prepared for Bible Study.

When he reached the home where Bible Study was held. A smiling widow shook his hand. She told him, "I am happy you are here. This morning God told me to pray for you. I prayed for you, Pastor. Yes, I prayed and I rejoice in this Bible Study with the people of God."

Eric was encouraged. God had told this lady to pray for him. God cared about pastors. Truly her prayers made a difference.

Pray! Praying is a powerful work for the Lord.

Twelve Wives

Have you ever thought to be thankful that your daddy has only one wife? In Africa today, some men have multiple wives.

"My father had 12 wives," Jacob said. "My mother was the oldest wife. There were many problems and much strife. My father had a favorite wife. Having enough to eat was, at times, a struggle." He continued, "The Bible is teaching me to have one wife. My relatives tell me I am a coward because I have not taken two or three wives, but when I visit in their homes, I see that they are full of strife."

It is amazing that there is still much peer pressure to have many wives in this part of Africa.

I ask, *Is the American equivalent divorce and remarriage?* Mark 10 tells us that God created one man for one woman. 1 Corinthians 6:9 says that adulterers will not inherit the kingdom of God. We do well to remember what the Word of God says about marriage and to follow its teachings.

Geckos on the Walls

Last night I pulled the kitchen curtain shut and I gave a start because a gecko went running up the wall.

I actually like those little “critters.” They are a welcome presence on my walls, floors, and ceiling, because I know they feed on mosquitoes and other insects. They are small, nocturnal “ghosts” which are great silent climbers because they have some kind of specialized toe pads which enable them to speedily climb smooth surfaces. So much for geckos!

Visiting Mary

I was surprised to see a small boy at her place. He bawled when he saw me. I guess my bleached skin frightened him. Mary was very happy to see me. I enjoyed visiting with her and her daughter-in-law, Emma. Mary also has a daughter named Emma, whose husband has a big drinking problem and beat her so badly that she brought her two children to her mother and went into hiding.

At Grandmother Mary’s place a big kettle hangs in a corner of her kitchen. Under it, sits a setting hen on eight eggs.

Many of these homes have two rooms. At night they bring into the house their cock, hens, and chicks so thieves will not run away with them. I wonder what it would be like to have a rooster in the house start crowing in the morning.

African culture is always to feed a guest, so Mary serves me a cup of *chai* and white bread.

I like to ask them what they remember from Bible Study the day before. Mary remembered. I was pleased that from it she remembered that the first and greatest commandment is, *To love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your strength.*

Do you remember what the Sunday School lesson was about, or what the preacher preached about last Sunday?



**Confess your faults without ifs or
ands or self-excusing evasions. Do
not be too proud to confess to your
inferiors, even to a child.**

- George R. Brunk I

Loving God in a Covenanted Relationship

Ernest Eby, State College, PA

The last few months we have been looking at a couple of human relationships that God used to reflect His love for us and how He wants us to relate to Him. In this issue we look at a third relationship.

If you wanted to let someone know that you would be their friend forever, what would you do?

Children, particularly girls, are very fond of writing notes to each other and making pledges in autograph books. In all sincerity, they will pledge to be loyal and committed friends forever.

Where does this come from? Deep within all of us is the desire to be connected to someone—someone we can trust—someone who is faithful. God understands this about us because He made us. He created us in His own image.

In ancient times, whenever two men who wanted to pledge loyalty to each other, they went through a long ritual to establish their friendship forever.

First, animals were cut in half along the spine and placed on either

side of a path. This was to show the seriousness of the covenant and the penalty that would accompany anyone who broke the covenant.

Then each man would remove his robe and exchange it with the other. They were “putting on” each other. In essence, they were no longer two people but one.

Next, the men would exchange weapons. This symbolized their loyalty to protect each other. If one of them had enemies, the other now had the same enemies. If one of them was in danger of losing his life, the other would fight to his last to save his friend.

Then they would exchange belts. The belt was a symbol of strength. This part of the procedure symbolized their reliance on the strength of the other.

Girded with each other’s clothes and weapons, they would then

walk between the pieces of animals showing that should they ever break their covenant, what was done to these animals should be done to them. They might make an oath like, “God do so to me and more also if I break this covenant”

Next the men would make a slit in their wrist and unite their hands and forearms together mingling their blood with the blood of their friend (in some cultures this was done as part of a marriage ceremony). The more scars a man had, the more covenanted friends he had.

Following this was a ceremonial meal that often consisted of bread and wine. (In some mid-eastern cultures today, eating from the same loaf of bread and drinking from the same mug is still considered a way of binding people together.)

Sometimes in such ceremonies, friends would give each other new names as part of the ceremony. Often a person would add part of his friends’ names to his own name.


In cases where the hands were not of equal social standing, the one who was higher on the social ladder would lower himself to the level of the other. Still, the superior one stipulated the terms of the covenant.

Finally, a memorial or monument would be established that would remind them of their allegiance to each other. This was a covenant that

could not be broken.

While some parts of this ancient ritual would not be appropriate for us as Christians, there are other parts of his procedure that are similar to the way God made covenants with His followers. Your mind had likely been making connections to stories in the Bible. Think of Abraham and Melchizedek, Jacob and Laban, and David and Jonathan. In the case of God and Abraham, we note the flame that passed between the pieces of meat and God changing Abraham’s name. We think of Jesus passing the bread to His disciples. The Bible is rich with symbolism.

Following Jesus’ instituting the Lord’s Supper and following Judas’s disappearance into the night, Jesus’ said to His close followers, “Henceforth I call you not servants, for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth, but I have called you friends.” Was Jesus thinking of Judas as He said this? Betrayal by a friend is one of the hurtful things a person can do to another.

But even in the face of such unimaginable treachery, Jesus made a lasting covenant with those He came to save! God incarnate made a covenant with us! God has promised that He will never leave us nor forsake us! What an unspeakable privilege we have as children of God to be his covenanted friends! 

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Periodicals

THOUGHT GEMS

Public opinion is what folks think other folks think.

• • • • •

Don't go overboard on optimism; we can't smile and whistle at the same time.

• • • • •

The best inheritance parents can leave a child is their good name.

• • • • •

Patience often requires hiding one's impatience.

• • • • •

The thing to try when all else fails is again.

• • • • •

Working hard may mean going all out until we're all in.

• • • • •

When a pessimist faces two evils, he takes both.

• • • • •

A plastic surgeon aims to increase people's face value.

• • • • •

Poverty may be simply the sidekick of laziness.

• • • • •

Life is fragile—handle with prayer.

• • • • •

No man lives better than his principles.

• • • • •

A conceited person makes no progress because he thinks he's already there.