

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

Galatians 6:14

MAY 2015

Meditation
It Trickled Down 1

Editorial
ODD.....2

Reader Response.....5

The Bottom Line
Faith is Not a Mere Academic Issue 7

Pilgrims.....11

Marriages.....12

Cradle Roll.....13

Ordinations14

Obituaries15

Observations17

Today and the Last Five Centuries21

An Appeal from a Widowed Person25

Mission Awareness
The Importance of Visitation26

Helpers at Home
The Joys of Motherhood.....29

Junior Messages
An African Safari.....31

Youth Messages
Loving God in a Promised Relationship 34

Thought Gems back cover

It Trickled Down

Kimberly Beachy, Belize City, Belize

It trickled down, from the clouds' spray.
The dew drops that freshens every day.
It trickled down, from the sun's ray,
The light of the dawning of a new day.

It trickled down, perfect love from above,
The manna, our Bread, our God of love.
It trickled down from His thorn crown,
The blood of His love, to heal my frown.

It trickled down, from His pierced hands,
The marks of a broken heart, punctured glands.
It trickled down, from His speared feet—spikenard's aroma sweet,
The journey, He walked and taught, yet suffered ill-treat.

It trickled down, the twilight's dew,
The water's fall, another splendid view.
It trickled down, the silent hush,
We ponder—His whisper comes at dusk.



Guest Editorial

ODD

H. Stephen Ebersole, Myerstown, PA

Oppositional defiance disorder. This is a newly diagnosed disorder, defined by experts in psychology as existing among children. It is characterized by negative, defiant, disobedient, and hostile behavior toward adults and authority figures. It is not to be confused with CD, or conduct disorder. Conduct disorder is recognized when a child violates the basic rights of others and expresses “antisocial behaviors.”

ADHD, attention deficit hyperactive disorder, is a slightly older defined child disorder. A child with this disorder cannot be calmed down and made to listen. Then there is RAD, reactive attachment disorder. This disorder is observed when children haven’t formed strong social bonds with their caregivers. DAD, disinhibited attachment disorder, is when children are plagued with attention seeking and indiscriminate friendliness.

More and more children in our culture are being diagnosed with

disorders, i.e, conditions that are not normal or healthy. Disorders call for therapies. Therapies are special treatment of diagnosis, counseling, and/or medications. Disorders require experts to analyze or evaluate what is the cause and what is the cure. In the professional world, there is a rising concern that the base of normal children is shrinking.

What should the Christian do with this flood of philosophies? What should we believe about raising children with diverse personalities? Since the experts believe children’s behavior is from a genetic, organic, or environmental base, should we change our basic child training beliefs? Are children victims of forces outside their control?

The following principles are a summary of timeless truths of the Bible. We need to affirm these principles in our hearts and practice them in our families.

Each child in the ultimate sense is created in the image of God. We believe the biblical account of

creation. God created Adam and Eve in His own likeness and image. (Genesis 1:26,27). Adam's sons were born in his own likeness and image. (Genesis 5:3). The human spirit and personality is a replication of God Himself. We are not the result of random evolution, mutation, and chance. Moreover, when each child is created in the womb, God personally oversees His creation and has infinite thoughts for each one. (Psalm 139:13-19). The product of this divine creation is that each child is incredibly complex, resilient, and gifted. There are receptors in each soul that are capable of connecting the child with teaching about God and forming a personal relationship with Him.

Each child is hopelessly corrupted and bears the image of Adam's fallen nature. Romans 5:12 informs us that "*by one man sin entered into the world*" and that "*death passed upon all men.*" The psalmist himself acknowledged that he was "*shapen in iniquity*" and that the wicked speak lies "*as soon as they be born.*" In Ephesians 2:3 we are informed that "*we...were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.*" From infancy children are incredibly selfish. They cry even when nothing is wrong. In toddlerhood the fallen human nature comes out with all its ugly expressions. Post-modernism has introduced and interjected many

legal and political terms in place of traditional terms, such as, selfishness, meanness, violence, dishonesty, deceitfulness, and so on. Giving traits subjective terms as issues or disorders does not change the behavior source. We shouldn't be surprised at and/or sensationalize human behavior; we can expect children to be bad!

The solution for raising all children is a balance of love and discipline. Parents need to enter parenthood with unconditional love and acceptance of the child/children God chooses to send them. God knows how much children need parents, and perhaps even more how much parents need children. (This is not to place a negative view of barrenness and reaching out for children in adoption. This pattern too speaks of larger-than-life principles of how each one of us is adopted into God's family.) In the season of life in young adulthood, God has planned for this investment in a future generation.

Each child, (even a handicapped child) should be treasured and given a baseline of love and acceptance. His needs should be met and love poured into his life. Along with this, as much as God blesses, children should be raised among siblings. Children receive infinite corrections to their human selfishness by living with each other. They learn socialization skills without knowing they are learning them.

In early toddlerhood, when the human traits of selfishness begin to emerge, parents will need to choose to confront each child's nature. Discipline should be for the child's needs and consistent with the disobedience. Spanking is one method God approves in child training. It's a normal need for most personalities—personalities God has gifted for a purpose He understands. The goal is to train each child to hearken to wisdom outside of his inner self. The Bible makes it clear that if a child is left to hearken to his inner wisdom, he will come to destruction. Children who learn to hearken to the voice of wisdom that "crieth without" and learn to listen to parents, other authorities, and even to each other, can come to enjoy a pleasant existence in earth life.

Sometimes parents raise questions about the exceptional child. "We have normal children," they say, "but here is one that clearly is the exception. How shall we treat this child?" The fact is, exceptional children are normal too! It may be their high maintenance requires greater doses of love and discipline. The worst stigma a parent can place upon a child is the idea that he has conditions/traits that are unmanageable. Mothers and fathers, please do your child a favor. Let him know you love him with all your heart, but let him know that you will not accept it that he does not

hearken to your voice. You simply will not cease discipline until he willingly obeys your directions.

If you missed this foundational platform when your child was young and succumbed to the idea that "my child needed to be treated differently than normal," you can always go back and admit this to him. He will benefit in any stage of life if you acknowledge your regret that you failed to bring his will into submission. Since he is created in the image of God, he can still choose the way of submitting his will to God's, even though it will be more difficult than if you would have taken your stand in those early years.

Ultimately, being converted, being born again, and receiving the new nature is the only hope for each and every human being. Jesus' death and resurrection provide a miracle of transformation in the human heart. Good training lays a platform, but it can never replace the new birth. Poor training with obvious needs may actually drive a person to see his need of conversion more completely. The fact remains, "*if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature [creation]*" (2 Corinthians 5:17). This is a day by day miracle as we walk with God through His Word and life of daily repentance.

Renaming and redefining human nature doesn't change the human will or nature. The negative disorders experts and professionals see today

can be recognized in the human record of the Bible. They can be identified in the familiar accounts of Cain, Joseph's brothers, King Saul, Absalom, Judas, and others. The positives can be recognized in the accounts of Noah, Daniel, the Hebrew boys, Nehemiah, Peter, Paul, and many others. ODD and ADHD are indeed novel terms,

but the old needs have always been with us.

Thank God for the Bible, our only unadulterated guide through the changing philosophies of life.

[From The Pilgrim Witness, March, 2015. Used by permission and slightly altered. We encourage taking this article in its entirety, and avoid isolating one aspect from the rest.]



reader response

Re: Editorial, March, 2015, "God's Not Joking"

I sometimes think that I'm the only living person who understands why Peter was so in awe of Lot. Turn to the Scriptures. Rip from it everything starting from just this story. What is left is about all that Lot had to go on.

The scene starts with God coming down from His pure heavens into the beautiful world that He had created. As in all His visits, it was a sin-filled world. He, at least, knew the hearts of men. Lot moved to a garden spot of God—"like the garden of the Lord." Do you ever wonder why the Holy Spirit moved the writer to add that? Then God spoke to Abraham about those cities in the plains.

Lot soon discovers that the natives of the city he moved into were corrupt and becoming more corrupt. Is part of the outcry that God heard coming

from Lot and his family? Obviously, Lot and his family knew what was going on and had already discussed it. How do I know? Lot sat at the gate in the evening. Why did he sit? Why at the gate? Why in the evening after people had finished their business? Because he was a judge? No. The words "and he will needs be a judge" In Genesis 9 proves that. The time, in the evening, disproves that, too.

Lot, therefore, waited long periods of time at the gates in the evening for travelers. Evening was the time travelers came for protection from the bandits and [to receive] general hospitality. The rich had inns inside the gates, but the poor were happy to find a well and a piece of ground to sleep on. This is what the poor in spirit are striving for today, too. But the cruel world doesn't care for them. Lot, like Christ to those poor, invites

them in. The angels repeat what every man of that culture “knew” and there was safety in the square of the city. But Lot “compelled them to come in.” Here a man, without the prompting of the Holy Spirit and knowing the evil around him, acts as God would have acted.

Lot “put” himself into mortal danger for the sake of the strangers. He knew these townspeople. He also knew his family and that they would die for the stranger under their roof. Do I assume too much? Perhaps you assume, you know, the opposite, that Lot was evil. [I suggest that he was *neglectful* rather than *deliberately evil*. -Ed.] I assume that Lot knew his family’s personalities and loved them. It was heartbreaking to follow the law of love (the facet of hospitality, in this case) and show that love to the stranger. I know atheists who have sneered at God for sending His Son to be crucified. I know of those who call themselves Anabaptist who are critical of missionaries taking their families into dangerous areas. If you think Lot was wrong, then so are the missionaries—and our Father.

Will you want to stand before God and tell Him that He shouldn’t have “so loved the world that he sent His only begotten Son”?

The angels believed Lot and were saved in a figure. Then they took off their disguises.

Finally, Lot is a perfect example of what you wanted to show in your editorial. Instead of thinking, ...”he could have been urging them to repent and call on God for mercy,” you missed what Lot did say, “...I pray you, brethren, do not so wickedly.”

Here Lot not only went out to these savage men but he called their contemplated act wicked. Note the previous phrase, “I pray you.” Note that he called them “brethren.” He was gentle, but firm, which firmness was the context of that remark, “and he will needs be a judge.” They pressed Lot, but he did not fight back.

We have plenty of Scripture and the Holy Spirit of Christ to guide us. I wonder if we show as much of God’s character of love as Lot did.

“Abide in the blessing, Who died to shelter us from Satan.”

David Smith, Parsons, KS 

If we consider excuses, we will never find it convenient to have family worship. We must make it one of the essential things not to be neglected.

-George R. Brunk I

Faith is Not a Mere Academic Issue

Aaron Lapp, Kinzers, PA

T rue, biblical faith is a moral issue, as it has always been. Compare that to economics, for instance. Honesty has become an issue among Anabaptists. Some seem to be verbally challenged. Promises made are not promises kept. One farmer orders 500 bales of straw. Three days later he calls back to cancel the order, saying he found some straw that is somewhat cheaper. The study of the market (academics) turned up a better deal. This has happened many times in our community.

An academic faith allows it to take place. A faith based on morals could not justify it. True faith takes God at His Word. But someone will say we need to be good stewards of our money, as though money was the pinnacle of stewardship. The larger consideration is honesty. Honesty is a moral issue. The life of the Christian is directed by morals, the standard of determining right and wrong. The Bible's specifics, as well as its principles are an unchanging basis for the establishment of morals.

Man's judgment is tainted by selfishness. And at times, is seriously corrupted by greed. When one adds popular opinion to selfishness, morals will no longer guide the outcome. God's judgment is unchanging, irrevocable, non-negotiable, and predictable.

Even the call to salvation is a moral issue. The confession of sin and of being a sinner by nature in need of forgiveness by God rests on the right and wrong. To claim acceptance by God based on baptism and communion alone can be akin to climbing up some other way into God's sheep fold. Jesus, by his death and resurrection, is the only way to salvation. Good works alone is really an academic approach, not supported by God's Word, as acceptable to eternal life, even though whole congregations might hold to a different view.

True, biblical faith sees the need to honor God's Word to the extent that it is accepted and lived out. Whereas academic faith considers other ways and means to offset what God has

said, even to replacing Scriptures that are bothersome with other Scriptures according to preference.

During the 1970's, the rights and wrongs of divorce and remarriage were being debated like a ping pong match. By some church groups, it became an academic issue. Accepting such in the church won out, based on the consensus of slanted Bible academics, instead of God's clear verdict on the matter.

Jesus had put the subject on a moral basis. He said, "Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her. And if a woman shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery" (Mark 10:11,12). Adultery is a moral issue, based on the words of God in the Ten Commandments given to Moses, and by Jesus;' words just as precisely. Remarriage after divorce is adultery.

Since the modern church needed to have divorce and remarriage approved, the Mennonite church (to be in line with Protestant thinking), chose academics by review and study as the route for institutional approval. Academic faith can make exceptions and allow what true biblical faith cannot.

In more recent times, homosexuals and lesbians were accepted all the way from membership to leadership, with church approval and eventual

celebration, various study groups offered desired conclusions, having helped bring it to this point of acceptance.

Same-sex marriage is now seeking to merge on the church's expressway. It seeks acceptance on an academic basis. Study groups, both secular and religious, are seeking to recognize the desirability of giving this abominable practice academic sanction. There seems to be an unspoken competition between states to legitimize same-sex unions. Some church bodies appear to be doing the same thing.

A current news article has made a big deal from some fresh pronouncements by the Catholic Church on this very un-Catholic issue. Previous popes could be depended on to take a firm stand against abortion and all deviant sexual life styles. They were more pro-family than many Protestants and some Mennonites. Their church doctrine was Bible-based, while some of their teaching on other issues were not scriptural.

Into this mix, the pope of today has taken a very startling position. It is like an earthquake of 6.0 on the Richter scale. The news article's opening statement by Nicole Winfield was wired from Vatican City. She wrote, "A fight for the soul of the Catholic Church that is more merciful than moralistic."

Very interesting. That is a major

swing, wherein mercy trumps morals! She writes, “The report ...signals a radical shift in tone about welcoming gays, divorced, Catholics and unmarried couples into the church.” Also, “This pope is focusing far less on the rules and regulations emphasized by his two predecessors.”

We need to be clear. This is not a fixed and settled issue for the Catholic church. However, we see it as much more than a slight breeze heading into a southerly direction. British Cardinal Vincent Nichols says, “It is not a doctrinal or decisive document. It is, as stated in its conclusion, intended to raise questions and indicate perspectives *that will have to be matured and made clearer on reflection.*” (Italics mine)

That is very precisely the terminology that academia uses en route to ratification. Pardon me, but it sounds like some Mennonite reasoning. Relegate it to study groups represented by different factions of the church, guided by those of the upper echelons of higher education. The upper crust leaders have an agenda, a bent toward inclusion, relevance, and free thinking, which quickly leads to ratification, which is quickly followed by ramification, which then becomes stuck in the Mennonite throat and can be neither swallowed nor coughed back up and spit out.

President Obama forwarded a

plank in his political platform that was pro-family. But early into his second term, he said his view on same-sex marriage “was evolving.” Purely academic. Purely political. The faithful in pure Bible doctrine are alarmed at how fast our nation, which was founded on Judeo-Christian principles and functioned largely thus for 235 years, could so rapidly disregard the very backbone of society.

Our nation saw it coming 20 years ago. Various states made resolutions to define marriage as being between one man and one woman. But judges in a majority of our states have now upheld same-sex unions as legal. The Supreme Court has, disappointingly, recently rejected taking up the issue, copping out by saying, “Let the states decide.” Very soon thereafter, they reversed themselves and said they are putting it on their agenda.

If, or since, the “church” cannot come with a clear decisive voice on a very basic issue, how can our legislators or courts do any better? Issues become academic items rather than moral considerations. Faith itself becomes an academic issue instead of belonging to the category of morals. Being academic, true, biblical faith can then float on the sea of relativism, and end up on someone’s shore as weathered driftwood, a mere relic of some bygone era. (everybody clap!)

Does all this leave us untouched

and unscathed? This same idea applies to other Bible teachings. Any bothersome part we don't appreciate or intend to accept of God's Word has identical implications. The women's veiling has too often become an academic issue, especially by those who wish to reduce its size, or in keeping with modern religious culture, do away with it altogether.

Non-conformity also comes into view. Worldly attire is a matter of degrees until a low level is reached where prevailing norms of society apply. As such, low necklines for women, and shirtless men have no say until prevailing public opinion is overstepped, which is academic in nature. Public opinion has so many variables in which any higher moral standard is seen as narrow-minded and lifeless. Morals have almost no claim, not until the public conscience is pricked enough to make a law against the undesirable and unacceptable. Even then, morals, are not the issue, but rather society's preferences, which then makes it a political issue.

Why is the nominal church powerless to lead in morals? Her faith has become based on academics and church politics.

Oath swearing, law suits, voting in political elections, are all academic issues, as far as the worldly church is concerned. By it, Jesus' teachings on non-resistance, buttressed

by apostolic verities, are beyond academic reasoning. We say they rest eternally on a foundation of inspiration given by God. These specifics have long since been written off by many church leaders and institutional professors as non-essentials in matter of biblical faith.

In such a climate any Bible teaching can be at risk and seen as outdated to be sidelined into some dead-end street that leaves the academic expressway. True faith is always a higher call, ready to believe God's Word as it is given.

The Bottom Line is that conservative Anabaptists are not free from the risk of a faith based on academics. There are areas where we have already succumbed to this subtle sideways movement, either in whole or in part. The principle of a faith based on morals or academics had been stated. Deference requires being discreet. Therefore, let every man be convinced as to his own faith in all scriptural pronouncements, whether they can for moral purposes be taken as God has stated them or whether we need to refer them to someone else's teaching as a matter of academic faith, being intellectually useful, perhaps, but morally not essential.

True biblical faith takes God at His Word. It is as a Mennonite minister of long ago said, "If God's Word doesn't settle our situation, then it will never be settled."



Pilgrims

Susan Garcete, Hartley, DE

[Inspiration from a Wednesday evening study of Pilgrim's Progress]

Pilgrims on the way to heaven,
On the way of better things.
Be it tiresome or delightful
Faithful, hopeful followings.

There are times of sweet refreshings,
Pastures green where lilies bloom.
Satisfying waters flowing,
Strength and light and lots of room.

There are times of difficulty;
Road is rough and feet are sore.
Sunny days are but a memory—
Must it be so evermore?

Anxious eyes scan the horizon,
Seems unending race to run.
Leaning on our understanding—
Really, something must be done.

Stepping out of straight and narrow,
Going where it seemeth right.
Unseen pitfalls, storms, confusion,
Have I lost the guiding light?

In the darkness, in the dungeon,
In discouragement, despair,
Trouble comes and none to help me.
Taken captive unaware.

O, that God would light my candle!
Suffering, hurting day by day.
I can live like this no longer,
Wandering off the King's highway.

Weapons of the mind and spirit,
Mighty battles rage within.
Yet, it's God that worketh in me,
Breaking down strongholds of sin.

Upward look that reaches heaven,
"Jesus loves me, this I know"
Found the key, the key of promise,
Hope doth flicker and will grow!

God hath said, and I believe it,
Here's a key that opens doors.
I'll not be ashamed, confounded,
Grace sufficient for my "wars."

Now mine eyes look straight before me,
Faith within brings victory.
Freedom from old doubts and failings,
Power o'er the enemy.

Drawing nigh, resisting evil.
Sin and sorrows, Jesus took.
Going on my way rejoicing,
For my name is in His book.



marriages

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

Beachy-Yoder

Bro. Davon, son of Jacob and Luane Beachy, Hutchinson, KS, and Sis. Joanna, daughter of Marion and Lizzie Yoder, Big Prairie, OH, at Sharon Mennonite Church for Grace Haven Fellowship, on Feb. 28, 2015, by David Yoder.

Coblentz-Stoltzfus

Bro. Michael, son of Andy and Clara Mae Coblentz, Owenton, KY, and Sis. Joanne, daughter of Elmer and Liz Stoltzfus, Woodstown, NJ, at West Park Methodist Church for Salem County Mennonite church, Bridgeton, NJ, on Nov. 22, 2014, by Lee Stoltzfus.

Esh-Wengerd

Bro. Julian, son of Steve and Martha Esh, Dickson, TN, and Sis. Cathy, daughter of Dean and Marianna Wengerd, Chuckey, TN, at the Liberty Baptist Church for Greene County Mennonite Church, on Feb. 28, 2015, by Raymond Fisher.

Goff-Yoder

Bro. Keyron, son of Evan and Glennis Goff, Scotland Halfmoon, Belize, and Sis. Janelle, daughter of Reuben and Martha Yoder, Crossville, TN, at Zion Mennonite church, Scotland Halfmoon, BZ, on Feb. 1, 2015, by Stephen Schrock.

Hochstetler-Lehman

Bro. Lucas, son of Lavern and LorAnna Hochstetler, Millersburg, IN, and Sis. Martha, daughter of Dennis and Mary Lehman, Goshen, IN, on Feb. 28, 2015, at Fair Haven A.M. Church, by Wilbur Yoder.

Keim-Yoder

Bro. Myron, son of Ray and Kathryn Keim, Georgetown, OH, and Sis. Karen, daughter of Andrew and Edna Yoder, Russellville, OH, of Still Waters Mennonite Church, on March 6, 2015, by Leon Troyer.

Ropp-Kuhns

Bro. Anthony Paul, son of Stephen and Rosemary Ropp, Monkton, ON, and Sis. Kristi Annette, daughter of Mark and Susan Kuhns, Leesburg, OH, Feb. 21, 2015, at Heritage Memorial Church for Faith and Light Mennonite Church, by Duane Troyer.

Zook-Fisher

Bro. Anthony, son of Galen and Karen Zook, Georgetown, OH, and Sis. Ruth, daughter of Andrew and Edna Fisher, Georgetown, OH, of Still Waters Mennonite Church on Oct. 18, 2014, by Leon Troyer.



cradle roll

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

Beachy, Brian and Valerie (Stoltzfus), Auburn, KY, sixth child, second daughter, Olivia Katherine Grace, March 4, 2015.

Beachy, Freeman and Shaena (Bontrager), Kalona, IA, second child, first son, Logan Mark, Dec. 7, 2014.

Beachy, Jaron and Vivian (Beachy), Laurelville, OH, first child and daughter, Karen Jade, March 17, 2015.

Bontrager, Brian and Lois (Miller), Chilton, TX, fifth child, third daughter, Andrea Rose, March 17, 2015.

Goff, Justin and Sarah (Schrock), Scotland Halfmoon, Belize, third child, first daughter, Alliana Natania, March 10, 2015.

Helmuth, James Dean and Janice Kay (Miller), Wellman, IA, fourth child, first son, Kurt James, Jan. 24, 2012. Adopted Feb. 5, 2014.

Hostetler, Eugene and Norma (Byler), Auburn, KY, first child and daughter, Brooklyn Danae, March 16, 2015.

Kauffman, Curtis and Kelly (Shenk), Leon, IA, second child and son, Jamian Curt, Jan. 22, 2015.

Kauffman, Lonnie Eugene and Shannon Mae (Miller), Ronks, PA, second child and son, Lincoln Stuart, March 3, 2015.

King, Shane and Myrna (Stoltzfus), Ephrata, PA, first child and son, Ayden Riley, Jan. 18, 2015.

Miller, James and Amy (Kropf), Riverside, IA, sixth child, third daughter, Amberly Dawn, Feb. 121, 2015.

Miller, Jared and Jennifer (Yoder), Leon, IA, first child and daughter, Kenzie Alexis, Feb. 7, 2015.

Miller, Reuben and Heidi (Kuhns), Dundee, OH, fourth child, third daughter, Katurah Elly, Feb. 11, 2015.

Puryeur, Brian and Sheeanah C., Stuarts Draft, VA, third child, second daughter, Amayah Sheeanah, Jan. 6, 2015.

Ropp, David and Arlene (Yoder), Currently serving in Kiev, Ukraine, second child and son, Rylan Andre, March 9, 2015.

Stauffer, Lawrence and Julia (Weaver), Jackson, OH, fifth child and son, Ethan Lawrence, Feb. 1, 2015.

Stoltzfoos, Clifford and Katrina (Zook), Gap, PA, second child and son, Tyrell Lewis, Jan. 7, 2015.

ordinations

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

Stoltzfus, Edward K. and Mary (Swartzentruber), Narvon, PA, fifth child, third daughter, Kayla Nevaeh, Feb. 12, 2015.

Stoltzfus, Glen and Rhoda (Stoltzfus), Narvon, PA, second child and son, Cameron Alex, Feb. 19, 2015.

Troyer, Eric and Ann (Kline), Leon, IA, first child and son, Travis Lee, Feb. 4, 2015.

Troyer, Leon and Mary (Miller), Russellville, OH, sixth child, third son, Wendell Leon, March 14, 2015.

Yoder, Michael and Rosina (Zimmerman), Dundee, OH, third child, second son, Derek Matthew, March 6, 2015.

Yoder, Millard and Carolyn (Yoder), Rural Retreat, VA, fourth child, second son, Conner Zane, March 30, 2015.

Yoder, Nicholas and Lynette Maria (Troyer), Greenfield, OH, second child and son, Jaxon Riley, Nov. 20, 2014.

Yoder, Raymond and Alina (Miller), Minerva, OH, fourth child and daughter, Sara Faith, March 3, 2015.

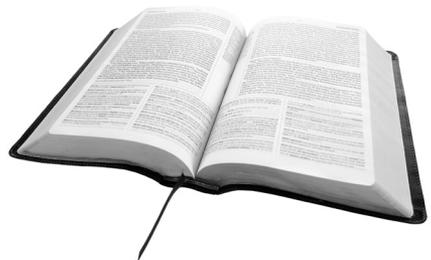
Yutzy, Titus and Sherilyn (Kuepfer), Hutchinson, KS, fourth child, third son, Kole Lorne, March 5, 2015.

Zook, Paul David and Verneda (Petersheim), Kinzers, PA, second child, first son, Isaiah Jon, March 7, 2015. 

Bro. Dave Miller, 31, was ordained as bishop for Still Waters Mennonite Church, Georgetown, Ohio, March 29, 2015. The charge was given by Leon Troyer, assisted by Homer Zook and Thomas Mast. Marcus Yoder was also in the lot.

Bro. Earl Miller, 52, of Cross Hill, SC, was ordained as deacon of Cross Hill Mennonite on March 8, 2015. Delmar Plank was also in the lot.

Bro. David Dean Troyer, 36, of Leesburg, OH, was ordained as deacon at Faith and Light Mennonite Church of Leesburg, OH, on Dec. 14, 2014. Preordination messages were given by Wayne Schrock of Catlett, VA. The charge was given by Duane Troyer. Also in the lot were Mark Kuhns, Thomas Miller, and Joel Troyer. 



Ropp, Elmer, 89, of Brunner, Ontario, passed away Feb. 23, 2015. He was born March 14, 1925, son of the late John and Emma (Wagler) Ropp.

He was a member of Fellowship Haven A.M. Church, Monkton, ON.

On May 18, 1954, he was married to Edna Wagler. She died on Aug. 11, 2008. Survivors include children: Laverne (Elaine) Ropp, Monkton; Miriam (predeceased, 2008); Murray (Hannah) Wagler, Millbank; Stephen (Rosemary), Brunner; Donald (Laurie), New Hamburg; James (Mary Ellen) Monkton; Larry (Susan), Lucknow; and Andrew (Wanda), Brunner; 44 grandchildren and 46 great grandchildren; sister-in-law, Adeline (Elmer) Erb; Barbara Kennel; Annie Ropp; Milton Roth; Marie Bender; Vera Dyck; Esther (Roy) Scheerer; Deborah (Joseph) Zehr; Florence (Andres) Bergsma; Mary Wagler; and Viola Wagler.

Preceding him in death were Emmanuel and Mary Ropp, Esther and Joseph Gerber, Clara Roth, Daniel Ropp, Samuel Ropp, Joseph Kennel, Daniel Wagler, Omar Wagler, Norman and Esther Wagler, Eileen Wagler, Earl Bender, and John Dyck

The funeral was held at Cedar Grove A.M. Church on Feb. 26, with Emmanuel Jantzi, Luke Wagler, and Melvin Roes serving. Arnold Jantzi conducted the committal at the church cemetery.

Troyer, Katie, 95, of Uniontown, OH, died March 1, 2015. She was born on the family's home place in Hartville, Ohio, on July 16, 1919, to the late Menno and Nancy (Miller) Troyer.

She was a member of Pleasant View A.M. Church.

On Nov. 23, 1939, she was married to Clarence Troyer. He died in 2004. Children surviving are: Martin and Shirley Troyer, Sarasota, FL; Melvin and Ina Troyer, Alliance; Elsie and Andrew Helmuth, Sandy Lake, PA; Marvin and Naomi Troyer, Lake Placid, FL; Violetta and Joe Troyer, North Canton; and Carol Troyer, Uniontown; 16 grandchildren, 36 great grandchildren, and nine great great grandchildren.

She was preceded in death by four infant children, including Katherine and Clarence, Jr., and seven siblings.

The funeral was held on March 5 at Cornerstone Mennonite Church with Homer Zook and Elmer Yoder serving. Burial was in Walnut Grove Cemetery.

Yoder, Dakota J., 10, of Centreville, Michigan, died Dec. 18, 2014, in Bronson Methodist Hospital in Kalamazoo from injuries received in a four-wheeler accident. He was born Mrch 12, 2004, a son of Vernon and Naomi (Yoder) Yoder.

Dakota attended Nottawa Christian School where he was in fifth grade. He attended Pilgrim Fellowship church in

Nottawa, where he enjoyed going to Sunday School.

He enjoyed helping on the family farm and loved being outdoors and trapping.

He is survived by his parents, Vern and Naomi Yoder of Centreville; two brothers, Zachary and Jamison Yoder, both at home, grandparents, Raymond and Edith Yoder, of Centreville and Wilbur A. Yoder of Mendon; and many aunts, uncles and cousins.

The funeral was held on Dec. 22, with Norman Yoder, John David Yoder, Paul Yoder, Jon Yoder and Delbert Miller serving. Burial was at Pilgrim Fellowship in Nottawa.

Dakota's Last Day

By his Mother

At breakfast Vern asked Kody to pray as he often did. Kody prayed his usual prayer that God would help him in his work and protect him and be with him and also to be with Mom and Dad in their work. I told him that we actually weren't going to work today--that we were going shopping in Kalamazoo.

When we went to drop Kody off at school, I went in to talk with his teacher and Kody ran back out to the suburban to get his lunch. As I came out, I saw Kody running to the basketball court full speed to play with the boys already there. I told the teacher that I wanted to come in after school and help Kody with his scoring. I wanted to be back by at least two o'clock.

I went by myself to pick up Kody and he and Trent came bursting out of the school, ready to play hockey. I stood by

the back of the school and watched them for a while. Then it was time to go in and Kody and I got his scoring done on his Social Studies. When we were ready to go home, Kody saw Vern's truck at Nottawa Lumber.

"Can I go with Dad?" he asked.

"No," I said, "We have schoolwork to get done and then go caroling tonight."

We went over to Nottawa Lumber anyhow because Vern had left his phone in the suburban. Kody ran in to give him his phone and didn't come out for a while. I went in to get him and found him listening to Vern and Eric talk. We then made our way home.

When we came inside, Kody looked out the dining room window and said, "Mom! Look at all them turkeys outback!" The turkeys were about half a mile away. He asked to go see them.

"Well, just be back soon," I said. He put on his orange stocking cap and jacket. I watched him ride down the lane on the four-wheeler. When I looked out again, he was chasing turkeys on foot.

Not long after, I got the feeling to go check on him. I thought he might be checking his traps. I went down the same lane Kody had taken. I came back down to the barns and yelled for him. Then I went down to Mom and Dad's. I called Vern but he didn't answer.

I came down by the lane west of the trailers and Vern called me. He said he would help me look for Kody, and he was coming toward me from the hog barn.

"There's the four-wheeler," Vern said.

"It's upside down," I said, I ran over

and found Kody lying face up under the four-wheeler, with his hat still on, His face was blue.

I pushed the four-wheeler off him and told Vern, “He’s dead!”

Vern hurried over and gave him CPR while I called 911. The EMTs put him in the ambulance and resumed CPR and after a while they said they had a heartbeat and they were going to transport him to Three Rivers Hospital. AirCare was then called to take him to Bronson Hospital in Kalamazoo, where he was put on life support.

The doctor did a CT scan and told

us there was no brain activity, probably from lack of oxygen but they needed to keep him on life support for 12 hours to give the swelling on his brain time to go down. The next morning, the doctor did a series of tests and said there was no life.

Kody was such a blessing to our family—he loved to be with his Grandpas, Dad and brothers every chance possible. Through his death he was a blessing to seven other children and their families, as we were able to donate his heart, lungs, pancreas, liver, intestines, and kidneys, with the kidneys going to two different people.



observations

Racial tensions continue to be prominent in current news. One side of the equation is that some non-white people fail to show respect for law enforcement officers that are often Caucasian. Sometimes their disrespect has become physical aggression toward an officer. When this happened in Ferguson, Missouri, the police officer fatally wounded his attacker. The officer called it self-defense. He was acquitted by a grand jury. Tension escalated and widespread lawlessness and disorder with destruction of property resulted.

A non-local investigation has assessed the situation in Ferguson. As

is often the case, there is another side to the story. The all-white police force is serving a community that is mostly black. The city government uses fines as a major source of income. Officers reportedly collect fines for very trivial offenses to generate income.

While this does not justify unruly behavior, it seems to remind us that there are two sides to the tragedy of Ferguson. This is likely true wherever there are racial tensions.



Conflict between people groups is not something new. At the time of Christ Jesus, Samaritans were considered inferior to the point of avoiding them.

In John 4, when Jesus spoke to the Samaritan woman at the well, she was clearly taken aback. Jesus' disciples were also surprised that Jesus simply ignored this deeply-held, man-made barrier and reached out to help a sinful Samaritan woman. She responded to His love and immediately witnessed to others.

When Jesus healed ten lepers, the one who thanked Him was a Samaritan. We don't know the identity of the man who fell among thieves, but the priest and the Levite left him lying beside the road. It was a Samaritan who helped him.

These examples remind us that to consider someone as inferior is misguided generalization.

I assume that to hear the word, Pharisee, reminds us that Jesus rebuked them very strongly for their hypocrisy and misguided priorities. (Matthew 23) Does this mean that the Pharisees were always bad? A Pharisee named Nicodemus came to Jesus by night. He had serious questions. Jesus answers have survived the centuries and are still vital and basic. His response in John 3:16 is perhaps the best known verse in the entire New Testament. It was first spoken to a Pharisee. John 19:39 says that Nicodemus showed respect to Jesus' body. This reminds us that the sincerity indicated in John 3 was not dormant.

A respected teacher, Gamaliel, did not participate in the misguided

religious zeal that tried very hard to stop the influence of the apostles. (Acts 5) In effect, Gamaliel's counsel was to leave the followers of Christ alone. "If this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to naught. But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it." It was a lone voice of wisdom and moderation that was very different from popular sentiment in the Jewish community. Jesus responded kindly to Nicodemus. He saw the woman at Jacob's Well as a person with serious needs. He did not allow an artificial, man-made barrier to keep her from getting help.

The above lines remind us that we should not over-generalize or stigmatize people groups. A willingness to reach out to needy people of whatever ethnic identity, was exemplified by Christ. We do well to take note.



"The Believer and the Temple" is the title of an article by Todd Neuschwander in the Jan./Feb. Issue of *FCM Informer*. The article is a helpful reminder that God's standard of modesty is very different from common practice of present-day society.

While Christian modesty is a condition of the heart, a modest heart will be accompanied by modest dress.

Some modern teachers would have us believe that the body is simply irrelevant. As long as you have Jesus in your heart, you can do

what you want with your body. Any serious discussion of modesty must recognize that God lays claim to the whole person, “And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thess. 5:23).

A Christian view of the body is important to a proper understanding of the principle and practice of modesty. The body is not for display. Modesty includes covering the body in a way that the eye is not drawn to those features that are private and personal. The body is not meant to be decorated. 1 Peter 3:4, “... let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart” with the uncorrupted beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit which is very precious in God’s sight. God desires for us values of genuine humility from forgiveness and submission and interdependence. “We see no eternal or spiritual value in the use of cosmetics and jewelry.” The body is not for desecration. Leviticus 19:28, “You shall not make cuttings in your flesh...nor tattoo nor marks on you. I am the Lord.” Author Neuschwander calls them works of darkness. Christians should have nothing to do with them, except to refuse them.

The body is not for destruction. The author is very uncomfortable with the increasingly common practice of cremation. Simply from

a point of theology of the body, I believe we move in a dangerous direction when we count cremation an acceptable practice. The body is not ours to destroy. It belongs to God, who endorsed burial.

• • • • •

Lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life are not of “the Father, but of the world.” Jesus was tempted in all points as we are, yet without sin. Jesus’ temptation in the wilderness was three-fold. The serpent in the garden also used eye appeal, delicious taste, and enlightened intelligence to lure Eve to yield. The effects of that encounter are still with us. When Achan saw the forbidden treasure in Jericho, he failed the test of temptation. Eye appeal, fleshly pleasure and pride are still in Satan’s tool box. By the grace and help of the One who was also tempted we can be victorious.

-DLM

• • • • •

“Thank you, Sir.” “Yes, please.” How often do you hear this sort of comment? Or more importantly, how often do you express this sort of verbal courtesy? “Please” and “Thank you” should be common lingo for us. When we have plenty of all we need, this tends to dull our awareness of our need for courtesy and gratitude. Becoming dull in those ways is not an age-specific problem. We parents do our children a wonderful favor when we teach them by instruction

and example the value of common courtesy. Let's lead the way.

• • • • •

I recently browsed a 38-page document of the 2012 World Directory of the Mennonite, Brethren in Christ, and related churches that includes many fascinating membership statistics. This document reports that MC-USA membership totals about 103,000 members. The Old and New Order Amish membership were lumped together and reported for this country as being 114,000 (those figures are rounded). One other interesting detail is that the African Mennonite Church is growing rapidly, while the USA membership is experiencing some membership decline.

These statistics concur with what I've heard elsewhere that indicate that in this country, the membership of conservative practicing Anabaptist groups has eclipsed the membership of those groups regarded as more progressive and less distinctive in practice. In light of these numbers, it is good to ask who is best qualified to represent the [historic] Anabaptist perspective in American society. Furthermore, let's be careful about the philosophy that says, "If we hope to grow, we must remove barriers of cultural and New Testament distinctiveness between ourselves and those we are trying reach."

One additional but related note that I find very interesting comes

from an Amish Mennonite Aid report given several years ago at the annual Beachy ministers' meeting. At that time, the Beachy constituency church membership indicated that there were one-seventh as many church members in Kenya as in the USA, despite the Kenyan church having begun relatively recently.

• • • • •

The Cline Avenue Bridge in Indiana was deemed unsafe in 2009. So it was closed and partially demolished. Recently Iftikhar Hussain, age 64, was navigating that route while traveling to visit family and was focused on following his GPS when he drove onto the bridge ramp of the non-existent bridge and plunged his car 37 feet off where the bridge used to be. He survived. His wife, Zohra, didn't. The local sheriff says, "The Cline Avenue bridge is marked with numerous barricades including orange barrels and cones, large wood signs stating ROAD CLOSED with orange-striped marking. There are concrete barricades across the road to further indicate that the road is closed."

Now might be a good time to remind those of us who use GPS, that this technology doesn't remove the need for awareness of our surroundings. Helpful tools can be dangerous, if they are exclusively trusted. Come to think of it, that applies to many other areas of technology and life.

-RJM



Today and the Last Five Centuries

Chester Weaver, LaGrange, IN

Recently I listened to historian John L. Ruth speak on a conference line recording. John has written several books including the gigantic history of Lancaster Mennonite Conference entitled, *The Earth is the Lord's*, containing almost 1400 pages. He also wrote *Maintaining the Right Fellowship*, a history of Franconia Mennonite Conference. These two conferences are the seed pods from which other Mennonite settlements have sprung, including the Shenandoah Valley settlement and the Kitchener, Ontario, settlement. John, a son of the Franconia Conference, did his unique narrative history at the request of his home conference. Later Lancaster Conference requested that he do the same for them. He has considered his call to write like a second ordination. His teaching career in literature prepared him to do his work well. His doctoral degree from Harvard University prepared him to teach.

John has led many Anabaptist tours to Europe and is well acquainted with the Anabaptist story there. Now in his 80's, John is reflecting on the Mennonite story in a big-picture way. His writing has been centered on the

Anabaptist narrative in America, leaving the European story to others. He has tried to be objective and fair with the stories he has told. He includes the stories of both personal and church failures, as well as their success stories. He feels a great sense of loss because his own people have lost central qualities of their own heritage. He does not hesitate to mention this fact as well as to note the conservative groups' successful recovery of many of his people's lost values. He wishes them well in their continued efforts.

The Conference Line recording stimulated my own thinking. I also have come from a people who have lost much of their heritage. I was born and raised in the Lancaster Mennonite Conference, baptized as a member there, and married a girl from the same conference. I have vivid memories of being a part of a church that was losing its values. I saw my father struggle with the problem. Eventually he led us as a family out of that setting to become part of the Eastern Pennsylvania Mennonite Church. I am so grateful that he did.

Thus I connect well with what John

L. Ruth has observed and written. I realize that the following thoughts might be a bit random, not being tightly tied together. They are this way because the source of these thoughts is John's random discourse on the conference line. He was not presenting an organized lecture; he was speaking extemporaneously, sometimes in answer to a question. I have added some of my own thoughts to his.

1. The Anabaptists insisted that the entire Scripture be interpreted through the prism of Christ. Even the apostolic letters in the new Testament needed to be interpreted through the prism of Christ. Fundamentalism, in its effort to be literal with Scripture, found reason for justification of warfare and participation in the political process in the Old Testament. So also the fringe Muenster Anabaptists found justification in the Old Testament for their heinous deeds.

2. The early Anabaptists saw that the political process is worldly. The whole concept of one group out-voting another group is worldly. When a group has winners and losers, they are operating on worldly principles. With such procedures the individual soul and the community is forced, is coerced into moves that are not freely chosen. By contrast, Jesus taught that people should do what they do because of love for God and His ways and because of love for

neighbor. This kind of love requires a renewed, transformed mind.

3. Mutuality/brotherhood (steadfast resistance to individualism) and concern for the purity of the Lord's table is at the core of who we are as Anabaptist people. When these two concepts are lost, Anabaptist people might as well join some other denomination.

4. When our people are not deeply rooted in the Scriptural reasons and Christ-like attitudes that created Anabaptism in the first place, they are vulnerable to all kinds of influences and nice-sounding ideas that come along. The only protection for such an unrooted people is intentional ignorance. However, ignorance does not inspire vision for the future. Huge losses are inevitable.

5. Anabaptists who are *not* strongly connected to their historical roots are easily swayed by the good rhetoric of Protestant preachers. The only way to prevent change for such people is to keep them ignorant. The best way to keep Anabaptist people in the Way of Christ is to keep them intimately connected to their historical roots. Historical roots have securely anchored multiple generations of Anabaptist families against contemporary winds which have blown from every direction.

6. By the latter part of the 1800's many Mennonite leaders had lost sight of their Anabaptist core values

and roots. The church leadership was into a sort of holding operation, just trying to maintain what they had. Do not lose anything; do not gain anything. This mentality translated into huge numerical losses for Mennonites because their children were hearing eloquent preachers present soul-stirring messages in other faith traditions. Many Mennonites concluded that their own tradition was simply dead and formal with no relevant answers for the new issues of the day, such as revivalism, the Sunday School, and the English language were providing.

7. One of the best ways to prevent present-day acculturation is to present the central thread of the Anabaptist story, the core Anabaptist values, in narrative form. Much has already been done but much remains. Leaders should harness literary ability whenever they see it among members to further this worthy cause. Children growing up with this narrative informing their worldview are much less vulnerable to competition from lesser values.

8. Historically, Anabaptist people have resisted, suspected, and feared eloquence as empty talk, somewhat akin to political speechmaking. Anabaptists have insisted on the fruits of the Christ-life and have downplayed rhetoric. However, their young people have thirsted for eloquence in their search for confirmation of their belief

system. Humble eloquence remains a spiritual gift when it is employed solely for the advancement of Christ's Kingdom. The Book of Acts mentions that eloquent Apollos, being mighty in the Scriptures, greatly helped the believers of that time. (See Acts. 18:24-28.)

9. When Anabaptist people are no longer excited about living ethically, treating their brothers and sisters honorably, operating businesses with a generous spirit (the good measure principle), and being an upright community influence, then non-Anabaptist options begin to become attractive. The historical record indicates that Anabaptists have *not* impacted their communities with a proverbial witness because money has spoken too loudly through the centuries. Tobacco raising, puppy mills, rent-to-own, and pow-wow-ing have not glowed with Gospel.

10. Far-seeing Mennonite leaders in North America understood that they needed to reach their young people with the scarlet thread of their own narrative when they were faced with the pressures of alluring logic from contemporary society. The war threat in early eastern Pennsylvania stimulated Bishop Henry Funk and Minister Dielman Kolb to ask the Dutch Mennonites for help in translating the Dutch *Martyrs Mirror* into German so that the young people could read it. They

wrote twice but got no help. Instead they got the Seventh Day Baptists at the Ephrata Cloister to do the job. The resulting book was the largest book printed in the English colonies at that time.

11. If the Anabaptist ideal cannot survive contemporary competition, it does not deserve to survive.

12. The locus of young people's imagination positions them with respect to God. If their imagination is fired by sports, God is largely absent, in deference to the sports god. If their imagination is captured by the electronic media, God is largely absent, in deference to the electronics god. If their imagination is fired by fun and parties, God is largely absent, in deference to the flesh god. But if Jesus Christ has captured their imagination, no other god has a chance because Jesus Christ fascinates the imagination all the way from the inside out. There is the Kingdom of Heaven.

13. When John L. Ruth made his life shift from teaching to writing, he asked counsel of a well-known Christian professor at the University of Pennsylvania. John mentioned that he will trust his faith community to see him through. The professor warned him, "When your community is through with you, they will kick you in the teeth." In the world of competing individuals, cruelty is normal; in the faith community,

respect and honor accompanies one to his end.

14. "The dream of our forefathers was that people walk in the Resurrection both in their individual lives and in their community life. I have not found this exemplified any better anywhere in human history than in our people."

The above thought-provoking words leave me with several challenges:

- Does my name glow with Gospel?
- Does my family glow with Gospel?
- Does my local church reputation in the community glow with Gospel?
- Does my church grouping (affiliation) glow with Gospel?
- Do the Anabaptist people of our day glow with Gospel?

What can I do about this?

Our young people are not really seeking:

- Music
- Money
- Friends
- Freedom
- Entertainment
- Latest technology
- Parties and pleasure

They are seeking a **valid purpose for life**. Adults owe young people that **gift**, the evidence that they themselves have found it.

If anyone desires to listen to John's talk on the Words of Life Conference Line, call 712-432-0209, and then 115.



An Appeal from a Widowed Person

Alfredo Mullet, Lott, TX

Life is very difficult ever since I lost my spouse;
Sometimes I wonder how I will ever face the day.
And when I get up to the emptiness in my house,
I often find it so hard the read the Bible and pray.

My mind becomes distracted as I reflect on my grief,
It seems that is all I can think and feel right now.
So I look into the Bible, hoping to obtain mental relief;
Although I read mechanically, God will bless somehow.

The Bible teaches to be thankful in all circumstances,
Thus, I really want to praise God because this is right.
However, though I try to practice it in most instances,
My emotions are too raw to keep up the spiritual fight.

Since we were a married couple for so many years,
It is very difficult to continue struggling in life alone.
We shared all the good and bad, the joys and tears,
Then, suddenly the dreams we anticipated are gone.

To make matters worse, there are those who claim
That if I were spiritual, I would rise above the pain.
But they do not realize one can never be the same
After losing a partner; and grief is tough to restrain.

Then there are other people who want to sympathize
and though well-meaning, cry and feel sorry for me.
What I really desire are friends who truly empathize
with concern, yet not urge me to wallow in self-pity.

Also, I long for those who will listen to my stories,
Even if the same accounts you have so often heard.
Though you may become weary, it is good therapy.
So, please be willing to hear my oft-repeated words.

Now, if when you ask how I am doing, I start to cry,
Do not worry, for I truly appreciate your loving care.
You need not spoil the moment by demanding why,
Just know that I am comforted by your being there.

In summary, I guess what I am attempting to say,
Is that my emotions fluctuate between joy and sorrow.
So do not be shocked if the humor you see today,
Is replaced by a deep melancholic spirit tomorrow.

[Alfredo Mullet's reasons for writing this is that in thinking about widowed people, he noticed that quite a few people whom he knows lost spouses in 2014. He thinks that too often we give all the support we have at the time, but then later we neglect to consider their continuing struggles. Alfredo notes, "For us, it may end at the funeral, but for them the struggle is just beginning."]



The Importance of Visitation

Floyd Stoltzfus, Belize/PA

To visit is to go or come to see a person or place; to stay with a guest. Jesus taught, “**Ye are the salt of the earth...**” (Matt. 5:13). Here Jesus spoke of the believer’s relationship to the world. Permit me to make application. People do not usually realize the importance of salt in maintaining life and health in their bodies. In our bloodstream there is always a precise percentage of salt and any great deviation from that amount results in sickness or in death. The proper amount of salt is also very important for the life and health of the body of Christ. Strong Christian families have a lot to do with being the godly, balanced “salt shakers” in the church and the world.

A beautiful injunction is inserted with other directives (each followed by “I am the Lord”) for Gods’ people in Leviticus 19: 33, 34. “**And if a stranger sojourn with you in the land ye shall not vex him. But the stranger that dwelleth with you shall be unto you as one born among you, and thou shalt love him as thyself, for ye were strangers in**

the land of Egypt: I am the Lord you God.” Some of our Anabaptist communities have thousands (even millions) of tourists visiting each year from many countries of the world. We ought to view these people through our precious Lord’s eyeglasses as a golden opportunity to be “salt” and “light” and thus spread the good news of the Kingdom.

Many years ago, Allen Lee Stoltzfus (deceased) and his wife, Malinda (still living) worked with Mennonite Information Center inviting tourists and foreign students to their dairy farm. Sometimes people would stay for several days, even up to a week or longer. Allen and Malinda hosted them in their farm house, served them meals, and conducted their regular family devotions with them. They sat with some of them until late at night answering questions and sharing with them the glorious Gospel of Jesus Christ. A few were saved. They kept contact with some of these for a long time and invited them back. I remember Bro. Allen sharing his experiences with tears

concerning tourists and foreign students while giving a topic at Calvary Bible School. He said it was a sacrifice, but so very rewarding!

Jesus seems to hint at these rewards in Matthew 25:34-40. **“Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked and ye clothed me; I was sick and in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? Or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily, I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.”**

We often consider visitation as relating to those sick in bed, comforting those who have lost loved ones, visiting those who suffer from internal injuries or broken limbs from a serious accident, encouraging those on their death bed, and so on. This is good and rewarding. It is also important to help an erring brother toward repentance. It is biblical to warn those who are cooling off in spiritual fervor, and to admonish

those who are engulfed with dangerous influences. The Hebrew writer has sobering words for us: **“(Therefore beware,) brethren; take care lest there be in any of you a wicked, unbelieving heart—which refuses to cleave to, trust in, and rely on Him—leading you to turn away and desert or stand aloof from the living God. But instead warn (admonish, urge, and encourage) one another every day, as long as it is called Today, that none of you may be hardened (into settled rebellion) by the deceitfulness of sins...”** (Hebrews 3:12, 13 AMP).

But there is another kind of visitation that is seriously neglected. Inside one of my old Bibles, is a copy of the promises I made and of the ordination charge when I was ordained as deacon. The first question asked: *“Are you willing to accept this call, and by the grace of God and the power of the Holy Spirit to give yourself fully to this ministry, as a faithful servant in the church of Christ?”* I answered in the affirmative, *“I am.”* I remember the weight and deep sense of responsibility that enveloped my being on bended knees, as I felt the hands on my head of those giving me the charge. A few aspects of that charge were: *“It will be your duty to look after the physical needs of of the members, visit the sick and widowed, comfort them and pray for them. It will be your duty to look after the spiritual*

needs of the church, to give personal help in their needs and devotion to the Lord; and to encourage them in the faith, in the Word, and in their love for the Savior.” Occasionally, I read these vows and the charge that was given. I meditate and reflect, “How have I been doing?” The minister should know his people and be well-known of them. Here’s my question: “Is visitation just the deacon’s responsibility?”

James wrote to the church in general, **“Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world”** (1:27).

On a Sunday evening or otherwise, why not make a call and visit a family in your congregation? Take your family along, expecting a rewarding, good, old-fashioned visit. I know of families whose fathers are not ordained that practice this “salt-shaking” frequently. If the people you are visiting have children, learn to know them by name. Take a special interest in them. Ask the family questions about their occupation or daily schedule. Direct the conversation toward a biblical topic. How do they conduct family worship? How do they overcome the intrusions and obstacles that steal away this sacred time? It is probably not socially polite to probe too deeply on certain issues, lest you lose their confidence.

You might discuss the glorious appearing of the second coming of Jesus Christ and Scriptures relating to this. Relate precious memories of yesteryear. I remember when, as a lad, close relatives who loved to drop in unannounced just before Sunday evening supper. A light snack was prepared and enjoyed with good feelings. Food and fellowship often breaks the ice to a deeper relationship. Home visitation builds confidence and cultivates long-lasting friendships. And do not forget the words of Jesus, **“When thou makest a dinner or supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen, nor thy rich neighbors; lest they also bid thee again, and a recompense be made thee. But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame the blind: and thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just”** (Luke 14:12-14).

Certainly, it is proper to visit those close to us, but at times it is more biblical to visit the lonely widow, the elderly, and those less esteemed in the church. Man desperately needs fellowship. One of the most severe forms of punishment is solitary confinement. A clipping from a meditation in *Our Daily Bread*, by Henry G. Bosch, says, “I heard of a true story from an elderly Christian lady who lived all alone. Partly

crippled, she had to rely primarily on the good will and help from her neighbors. She spent some weary hours keeping a diary, although no one knew why, for she had precious little to record. Finally the Lord called her to himself to enjoy the blessings of a better land. It is reported that she lay dead for several days before anyone missed her! In looking through her few belongings, someone discovered her diary. Near the end of her life, as one day followed another, she wrote three pathetic words on page after page, ‘No one came. No one came.’”

How do we bridge the deep ravine of social barriers and racial conflicts? It involves time in tearful, agonizing prayer and by all means visiting

and communicating with others by showing deeds of kindness in the community even if it does not seem to be greatly appreciated. To properly prepare the soil for the precious seed of the Gospel the laborers must grow in favor with the people to whom they would minister. We must be honest, willing to confess when we make mistakes, bless those who curse us, and daily exemplify the fruit of the Spirit, without showing partiality.

How is my salt content? Am I sprinkling it as a healing and cleansing agent to those who have hurts? In our visitation, **“Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man”** (Col. 4:6).



helpers at home

The Joys of Motherhood

Mary June Glick, Seneca, SC

May is Mother’s Day month, a time to give special tribute to mothers. We know we don’t always deserve the honor we receive. Yet, I believe God plans for children to show love and respect to the one who cared for and loved them during those tender, formative years of their early life.

I love being woman and mother.

From childhood, motherhood had been my dream and desire for the future. I loved to play with dolls, to dream of a family. I believe God used those childhood toys and dreams to prepare me for motherhood.

Mothers, I believe it is good for your little girls to play with dolls, dress-up, and all the girlish joys of childhood. You may be the one to

teach your child how to be a mother by showing her how to hold her doll baby, pretend to cook, or to enjoy a simple tea party with her. Do not allow electronic toys and activities to rob your child of actual play time and imagination. I realize that not all girls enjoy dolls equally well, but you can still encourage them. At the same time, allow their imagination to take flight in other areas on the swings, playing ball with brothers, and other athletic adventures.

There is much joy in fulfilling the role of motherhood. There are many women who are not mothers and this is not to say they have missed out on the ultimate joy of life. The greatest joy comes in accepting God's plan for you. Also, there are many women today who do not much enjoy being mothers. I am aware that personalities and temperaments vary and not all women just naturally enjoy motherhood. Maybe they did not learn from their own mothers. However, God planned a woman's body to enable her to become a mother and He will also provide the joy and grace to enjoy motherhood.

Each of us have had a mother. Much of who we are comes to us through our mothers, either *taught* or *caught*. It is important to think about the impact you will have on your child's future.

I believe every Mom desires to be a **good** Mom. I want to explore a few ways that will help yo to be such a Mom.

Enjoy your child.

Each child is an individual with a distinct personality. Accept and love without partiality. Do not compare or show favoritism.

Walk in your child's shoes.

Try to remember back to when you were a child. The world looks different through the eyes of a child. What made you happy or sad in childhood?

Get down on the child's level, both figuratively and literally.

Become involved in your child's world. Sit in the sand box or on the floor and play with the toys, read stories. Share a snack and listen to what is said.

Make your home child-friendly.

Your home should be a "welcome" place for your child's friends. Set aside a place where they can play, and spill the Legos across the floor. Keep toys, games, and snacks available.

Choose your battles.

There are times that you must say, "No," and stick to it. Other times you may stop and ask yourself, "Will it really matter?" I wish in hindsight, I would have chosen more wisely.

Practice being there, both physically and emotionally, for your child.

Be at home when the children come home from school whenever possible. Make the most of each moment, whether it be mealtime, play time, story time or time to work.

Simplify your life and schedule.

I believe every family faces this difficulty in today's busy lifestyle. How can we spend more time at home with our families? I would encourage parents to set limits on

evening activities. Set priorities—which is most beneficial to the whole family? Pray and commit to changes in your schedule.

These are only a few suggestions. You can add to the list. Ask your husband and your children for ways that you can be a better Mom. Commit your desire to God, and some day your children will grow and call you,"Blessed." 

junior messages

An African Safari

Mary Ellen Beachy, Kisumu, Kenya

In Kenya, the Masai Mara are vast, wild plains covering 371,000 acres that teem with wildlife.

The variety of creatures roaming wild and free that we were privileged to see reminded me of the verses in Psalm 50:10-12: "For every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills. I know all the fowls of the mountains, and the wild beasts of the field are mine... the world is mine and the fullness thereof."

The countless wild beasts on a thousand enormous African plains are God's and are a tribute to His

greatness and power. Come with me and I will tell you about some of the many things we saw.

It was exciting to see the powerful lions. The first one we saw was lying on her back with her paws folded on her chest, relaxing peacefully. We drove very close, 10 feet away. It did not seem safe with the large open windows of our Land Rover. But then our guide, Anthony, was very experienced and has worked there for years. We found more lions resting among some bushes. The lion cubs are playful and very interesting to watch.

The cute little dik diks are quite

fascinating. They mate for life. If one dies, the other will stop eating and soon die. They do not go to the water to drink, but get their moisture from dew laden foliage.

The gray African wart hogs are not pretty. They have a short neck, and go down on their knees to eat grass. When they run their tails go straight up. Our guide called them The Kenyan Express.

Did you know that guineas are wild fowl in Africa? The helmeted guinea fowl, called the Masai chicken, are quite nice with their speckled feathers and blue heads. The crowned eagle which we saw on a tree top may have been looking for a guinea lunch.

We saw numerous birds: plovers, warblers, ant eater chats, white-bellied bustards, crowned eagles, and the large yellow billed stork. The funniest of all was a pair of ostriches, the male with his red legs and neck was doing a comical dance to attract the female. The female was hanging her wings down in a floppy way and then went running across the savannah with the anxious male in hot pursuit.

Cape buffaloes are huge beasts with big horns, and are dangerous when annoyed. Even lions respect the cape buffalo.

Of what use are zebras with their

stripes — a bold contrast of black and white? Each one is different, with its unique set of stripes. Zebras have a weak back, I am told, and when man has tried to tame them to carry loads, it just does not work. A large group of zebras is called a dazzle.

Wildebeests are numerous. African folklore says they were created last of all the animals, using the left-over parts, with the face of a grasshopper, the beard of a billy goat, the horns of a buffalo, and the tail of a horse. Many tourists come to Africa to see the migration of wildebeests. Our guide said they are not called a herd, but rather a confusion of wildebeests. They look comical when they run sideways, watching as they gallop away.

There are myriads of gazelles and antelopes on the savannah. Their ringed horns are long and curved; A few names of gazelles are the Impala antelope, the Thomson Gazelle, and the Grant gazelle.

We saw one huge eland. It leaped up, jumped some graceful bounds, and seemed very happy with life! It's a huge beast that can weigh up to a ton and jump four feet off the ground.

Baboons are really fun to watch. The babies cling to their mother's backs. They exist in troops. They are

sociable animals that eat fruits and vegetation and will even catch and devour small animals.

The giraffes are so tall that they cannot hide well. It was amazing to see their heads and long necks sticking high above the scrubby bushes. After a 14-month gestation period, the females give birth to a six-foot baby! A group of giraffes is called a tower.

In the fresh morning we spotted a lone, massive hippo waddling along on green grass. They feed at night on the vegetation and cool off in the water during the day. Many hippos are called a school or a raft.

Then there was the mongoose, an amazing small animal that kills and eats poisonous snakes and the cute little bat-eared fox who likes termites for his lunch.

One spotted hyena we saw was chewing on the carcass of a small wildebeest. They just look so ugly with their spotted bodies, large heads with round ears, and front legs that are longer than their back

legs. They are the clean-up crew on the plains, feeding on dead animals.

It was a pleasure to see huge, gray elephants, with a small one right beside its mama.

We noted a zebra that had been killed and was being eaten by hyenas that were gorging themselves. Many, many vultures were gathered around for their turn and also three maribou storks on their long legs waiting to pick up any fallen morsels.

Scrub hares were out when we drove home in the twilight. It was dark when we came to another fallen zebra. A hyena had found it and was going in for a feast. Watching it tear into its food was both fascinating and gross!

Okay, now, I hope you enjoyed this tour! There really was much more, the graceful leopard, the cheetah and her playful cubs, and many, many different birds. Wherever you are in this wide wonderful world, whatever you see, thank and praise the Lord for all the marvels of His creation!



A chicken-killing dog and a person given to sexual sinning are hard to reform, but God is able to save to the uttermost those who come to Him.

-George R. Brunk I

Loving God in a Promised Relationship

Ernest Eby, State College, PA

There's a fourth human relationship that God uses in the Scriptures to help us understand how He wants us to relate to Him.

Through the Old and New Testaments, God is pictured as a fiancé or husband who is fully committed to his fiancée or spouse. The New Testament uses the betrothal relationship to describe His present commitment and feelings toward his people. This "promised" state describes His relationship with the Church prior to the marriage supper of the Lamb. This marriage supper could be viewed as the culmination period of all time. It is the beginning of the "happy ever after" that all creation is anticipating. However, only believers in Christ will get to be part of this marriage.

This metaphor is different from the other human relationships we've looked at in previous months. In this metaphor, the "bride" refers to a group of people, not one individual person. We are the fiancée and Jesus is the fiancé! This metaphor is also different in that both men and women are

considered the bride of Christ. Men reading this article may find it difficult to think of themselves as a bride.

How does our relationship with God begin?

Our relationship with God starts with Him first pursuing us. While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Before we even knew He existed, His heart was for us and towards us. Sometimes a lover is drawn toward another person for a long time before the other becomes aware of his intentions. This is the way it is between God and us. He loved us since we were conceived.

Just as many lovers do today, God starts showing up at places where we will notice Him. God wants us to be part of His bride and so He keeps showing up in the most interesting ways and in the most amazing places. He is hoping we will respond to His attention. As God keeps showing up at various junctures in our lives, we realize that He wants a relationship with us. Then we have a choice. Will we respond to His love or will we seek the approval of the world? The most logical choice would be to accept His

request for friendship. Yet Scripture teaches us that all of us to some degree decline His friendship.

In order to grasp how foolish this is, imagine the most characterized gentleman in the world knocking at a lady's door, asking her for her friendship. When she opens the door, she tells him, "What will this relationship cost me? What will I need to sacrifice?" And then, after hearing His answer, she turns away sadly and closes the door.

This is what [most] of us have done at some point in our lives. But then, God continued knocking, we who have allowed God into our heart eventually opened the door and began responding to His love.

What kinds of relationships do people have with God?

Sometimes in human relationships, a man or a woman will pursue their lover too fast and not let the relationship build at a healthy pace. They let their heart get ahead of their head. If your initial relationship with God was based on emotionalism, it is possible that your relationship with Him grew really fast, but soon floundered. Maybe God didn't give you what you thought a suitor should give to those He loves. Maybe God gently reprovved you and you felt hurt. You might not have known what God is really like, because you never stopped to think about who He is. Some people quit "courting"

God early in the relationship because their relationship was based on an unrealistic view of God.

Perhaps your relationship with God was not built on emotionalism. Maybe your initial relationship could better be compared to a casual courtship in which you had little love for your Lover. In a casual courtship, a person decides to relate to Jesus in the same state of mind as someone might take with their vitamins. The person has been taught that a relationship with God is supposed to be a good thing and so they start "dating." If it were not for the fact that they thought they might get some benefit, they probably would not bother with the relationship.

But because of their religious training, when Jesus comes knocking on their door, they accept His invitation because they know they should. However, such people have not given up their other interests and affections. There are too many other "fellows" they want to court also. They might agree to "date" God once a week or every other month but they don't want to get too "thick" with Him. Many Christians have a casual relationship with God all though life. They assume that if they do a few things with God once in a while, He will let them into heaven some day. This kind of relationship will not result in a delightful fiance' /fiancee' relationship nor a place at the marriage supper of the Lamb.

Some people's relationship with God is more like a rocky courtship. These folks' relationship with God goes up and down and all over the place, depending on their love for God at the time. Sometimes their love for God is ardent. Then it slacks off. These folks try to keep God in first place in their life, but they find that He frequently ends up as second or third or fourth or even tenth place in their life. When someone preaches an inspiring message, they realize that something is missing. They may recommit themselves to "courting" God more often. A few months later they are back to where they were before. After many cycles of this, they begin to realize that this is not the way a courting relationship is supposed to be. They realize that their affection should not be up and down and all over the place, but rather a constant movement in the same direction.

Deep down, they know it is ridiculous to love God some days of the year and not others, but they can't seem to break out of the cycle (in human relationships this is sometimes referred to as "the crazy cycle.") A person who finds himself in such a relationship with God has several options: He can keep on doing the same thing and hope for different results. he can simply quit the relationship or he can settle for polyandry.

Polyandry refers to marriage relationships in which women have

more than one husband. People who settle for polyandry decide to "marry" all their suitors. They convince themselves that it's okay to have more than one "husband" as long as they love God the most. Satan and many professing Christians are trying to convince Anabaptists that polyandry is the solution for keeping God Number One. These Christians have developed a culture in which it is acceptable for people to marry all their suitors and still claim God as their primary husband. Jesus tells us that this is not possible. He doesn't want only first place, He wants to be our *one and only*.

There are other unhealthy relationships we could use to describe people's relationship with God. Perhaps you can think of more as you reflect on your relationship with God.

What does a solid courtship look like?

A solid, healthy courtship requires a beginning. Couples who don't know each other well do not expect deep heart-to-heart conversations on their first date. They might expect intrigue, and courtesy, and delight, but not intimacy. In a solid courtship, it takes time and lots of interaction until the couple is sure that is the person they want to marry. In a healthy relationship, both the man and woman are not looking at other prospective companions. They begin courting each other with the intention that the relationship will

mature into a wonderful fiancé / fiancée relationship and ultimately a committed marriage for life. In human relationships, these goals don't always happen. But any time a Christian enters into a relationship with his Creator, there is no reason for the relationship ever to dissolve. God is completely dependable and the only reason for the relationship to dissolve is if he walks away from Him.

If you have just recently begun your relationship with God, it may take some time to develop trust in Him. Pursuing a relationship with God takes time, just like a solid courtship takes time. I have known several youth who were challenged to begin a serious relationship with God. They tucked their Bible under their arm and headed for a mountain or sat beside a rippling brook. Nature is indeed a good place to meet God. However, they expected their first serious "date" with God to go something like the last date before the wedding. When the relationship didn't develop that fast, they were very disappointed.

Perhaps you have been disappointed with your initial relationship. If so, don't expect something that is unrealistic. You have a whole lifetime ahead of you to get to know God. I would encourage you to interview a dozen spiritual giants. Ask them how they came to know God and what their relationship was like at the beginning. Ask them how they grew their relationship. I'm

guessing you will learn a lot from these conversations.

If you have younger siblings or know of someone who has not yet begun a relationship with the Lord, let them know about God and His love for them. Many youths' thoughts are so consumed with escaping hell that they don't realize God's heart toward them is like that of a groom toward his bride. If they could sense the love God has for them, perhaps they would begin relationship with God on a solid footing.

There should come a time in every person's experience with the Lord, after he's tasted and seen that the Lord is good, that he knows in his heart of hearts that this is for sure the one he want to love for the rest of his life. I was in my mid-twenties before I reached this point in my relationship with God. Not only was it the right thing to do, but I wanted to commit my heart to God as well.

May you be blessed as you develop your relationship with God. It is an unspeakable privilege to be part of the bride of Christ. I hope that some day, you will be at the marriage supper of the Lamb, where all the redeemed will live with him forever in perfect relationship.

[Traditionally in developing relationships it is considered proper for the man to do most of the courting, a very insightful parallel can be made for the bride's eager participation in the relationship. -PLM]



(USPS 767-160)
Calvary Messenger
2673 Township Rd. 421
Sugarcreek, OH 44681

Periodicals

THOUGHT GEMS

One of the most displeasing things to God is complaining saints.

• • • • •

In adapting the Gospel to the age, men have crippled the true Gospel.

• • • • •

Be sure your convictions are more than mere prejudices.

• • • • •

If your bell isn't ringing, ask God to show you if your clapper is broken.

• • • • •

Happy is the man who renounces anything that places a strain on his conscience.

• • • • •

He is not poor who has but little, but he who desires much more than enough.

• • • • •

A small river can carry a lot of water if it keeps running.

• • • • •

Why emphasize the negative? Why do we not see? "Friendly Dog!"

• • • • •

Critics are those who are satisfied to sit on the sidelines and utter snide lines.